



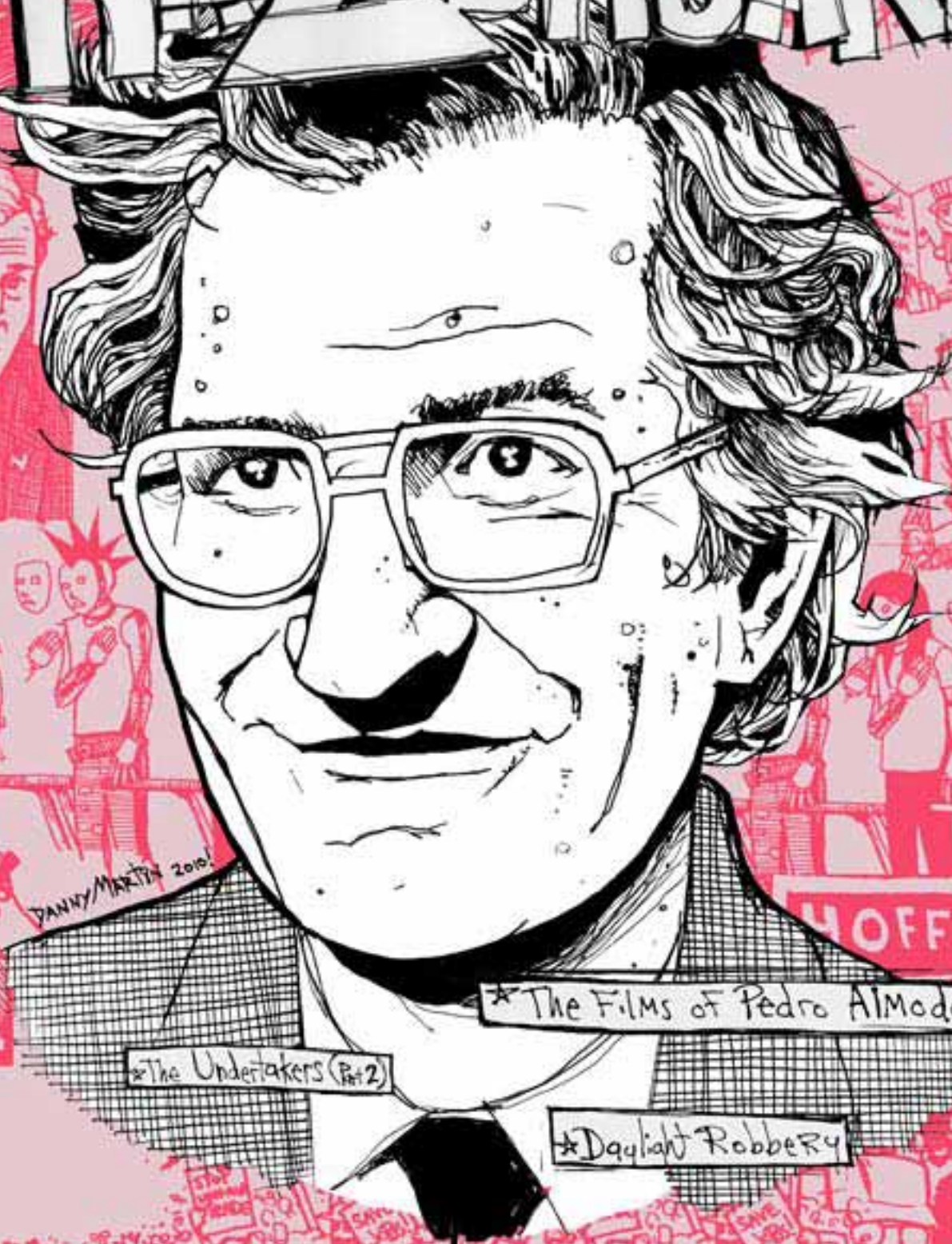
RAZORCAKE  
NON PROFIT

# 57

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# RAZORCAKE



DANNY MARTIN 2010

\*The Films of Pedro Almodóvar

\*The Undertakers (Pt 2)

\*Daylight Robbery



# RIP THIS PAGE OUT

*Razorcake* is a bonafide non-profit music magazine dedicated to supporting independent music culture. All donations, subscriptions, and orders directly to us—regardless of amount—have been essential to our continued survival.

Razorcake has cleared a big hurdle. After five years of applying, we've been awarded our first grant. It's through the Department of Cultural Affairs (the DCA), which is an arts-and-culture advocacy arm of the City of Los Angeles. We couldn't be happier. The grant is called "operational," which means that we continue what we're doing, monitor it in specific ways (like website statistics, the shows we throw, and how many subscribers we have) and give the DCA their props for helping Razorcake out. That's why their logo's in this zine. I'm also proud that we did all of the grant writing in-house. It couldn't have been accomplished without the longtime work by volunteers Matt Braun and Jenny Moncayo. Thanks to everyone involved.

Here's where we'd like to spend some of that grant money. Website coding is the one area that we haven't been able to take up on our end since it's out of our realm of expertise. If you know someone who fills the following criteria, please have them email Razorcake for a potential interview.

1.) Lives in the L.A. area and can come into HQ for regular meetings and updates (A lot of this will be face to face. We have had remote web coders who have been awesome, but the process has always bogged down.)

2.) Is a website *coder*. (We're less interested in website *design*. We're most interested in "how can we..." to our existing site.)

3.) Has experience/has demonstrable intuitive knowledge of PHP Nuke, Zen Cart, and Paypal. (This may not be the sexiest system set up, but it works and I don't think we have the funds to install a brand new CMS (content management system) like Drupal.)

Razorcake/Gorsky Press also continues to slowly expand and strengthen. For the first time since its inception, we decided that it was high time to add two more distinctive voices to our Board of Directors. Welcome aboard, Catherine Casada Hornberger and Daryl Gussin!

If you would like to give *Razorcake* some longer-term, hands-on assistance, we're looking for volunteers in the following areas: locally based non-profit grant writer and non-profit fundraiser, FileMaker Pro wizard, PC network specialist. If you live in the L.A. area, we could always use a helping hand. Contact us via [www.razorcake.org](http://www.razorcake.org) if you'd like to help out.

Thank you.

—Todd Taylor

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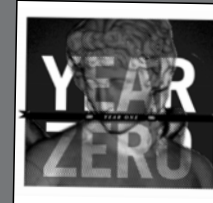
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## Do It When You're Young

The Razorcake headquarters is on a steep street. At the top of the hill, on a clear day, you can see downtown L.A., six miles away. When people walk up the street, they look like zombies shuffling. The graffiti stops at the second house up the hill, gravity beating out lazy juvenile delinquency. I was working in the front yard with a pitchfork and saw a kid walk up past me, skateboard in hand. I didn't think too much of it—HQ is situated less than four-hundred yards away from a skatepark that many folks at Razorcake had fought for—and mildly considered that the kid was going home or visiting a friend.

Our steep street ends perpendicular to a busy street, Meridian. Our street's so steep that there's a guard rail on the far side of Meridian to prevent cars from crashing into the park and killing soccer players. It's the heavy duty type of rail that's on the sides of winding highways.

I pitchforked some more. Then I heard the sound of skateboard bearings screaming at a high rate of speed. The kid on the skateboard came into view. His fourteen-year-old face was expressionless. Short, combed, gelled hair. Clean black T-shirt. Tight black pants. White MP3 player earbuds in his ears. Concentrating. Eyes focused. No helmet.

My first impulse was to tackle him; take him clean off the board.

But, I'm not a cop.

Hell, I'm not even a dad, and part of me wanted to see how it all played out.

When I was fourteen, I'd suffered my second bad concussion skating. I ran directly into a wall. I failed to turn after going down a steep sidewalk. I remember a couple days later picking out the stucco pebbles that had worked their way into my temple. The sidewalk I'd skated years ago seemed as flat as Nebraska compared to the hill this kid was bombing.

I quickly glanced down the hill. The kid's spotter, an even younger lady, wasn't doing her job. She wasn't standing in the middle of

Meridian, the perpendicular street, making sure a car didn't sideswipe the skater when he hit the intersection. She stood between two parked cars, partially hidden from traffic. She had both of her hands balled up to her mouth, in position to quickly cover her eyes.

To make matters worse, a white truck was at the bottom of the hill, signal on to make a left turn, directly into the trajectory of the skater.

Luckily, a car passed on Meridian when the skater was fifty yards from the intersection. The truck remained in place.

The skater didn't wobble even though his wheels were screaming. He was train-on-a-monorail straight as he hit the intersection.

Exit strategy? The kid couldn't just jump over the rail and into the grass. He had a five-foot-tall fence on the far side of a sidewalk to contend with. There was no way he could make a ninety-degree turn.

So he put his foot down to stop. Quickly realizing that wasn't going to work, he fell off his board and slid across the other half of the street on his back, head first. He'd built up so much momentum that, while his body lay slightly crumpled on the curb, the back of his head gonged against the guard rail. It was a sickening sound.

I thought, "I don't want to see a kid die today." I went to go get my keys, get him in the truck, and take him to the hospital.

The girl knelt down near the skater's head. A small crowd formed around his unmoving body. There was no hooting and hollering. The skater was stock still.

A minute that seemed like five passed. The kid's eyes opened. He shook off the hands telling him not to move his head around.

He stood up, and on shaky legs, walked slowly away; one arm around his girl, one around his skateboard, never uttering a word.

—Todd Taylor

### AD / CONTRIBUTOR DEADLINES

#### ISSUE #58

August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010

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"She smacks and smacks,  
as if the concept  
of square, of round  
are notes that need  
a good whack  
in order to sing—"

—James Jay, *The Journeymen*

This issue is dedicated to the memories of Alan Sillitoe and Alex Chilton.



Hey, look at that. Officialized. *Razorcake's* in the Portland library! Thanks for the photo, Craig Williams.

**THANK YOU:** "Yes, Noam Chomsky. That's right." thanks to Danny Martin for his crackerjack illustration and graphic design for the cover; *Totally Busted*, "is that light on your good side?" thanks to Brad Beshaw for his illo. in Sean's column; His moustache swoops at the same angle as the part in his hair thanks to Jackie Rusted for her illo. in Jim's column; Seedy sneaker underworld, "I'm buying two pairs—one to wear, one to boost up on auction" thanks to Ryan Gelatin for his illo. in Norb's column; Chicken, you're never second fiddle to a monkey thanks to Nicole Twardzik for her photo in the Chicken's column; "Yeah, but do you have the Czechoslovakian pressing with Dee Dee's sack print?" thanks to Craig Horky for his illo. in Dale's column; Shaking babies and kissing hands, vote Gary! thanks to Jason Armadillo for his illo. in citizen Hornberger's column; Who let the dogs in? thanks to Bill Pinkel for his illo. in Nardwuar's column; Feels like we're plotting out some of the major stepping stones of East L.A.'s punk backyards, and that's an awesome feeling thanks to Jimmy Alvarado and Angie Garcia for *Three Undertakers* interview, photos, and handwriting; White sheets in the street, punk marriage, have PA, will travel thanks to Annie Saunders and Sarah Ryzek for the *Daylight Robbery* interview; Persistence, pertinence, more persistence, and focus thanks to Ryan Leach, Danny Martin, and Lauren Measure for their interview, illustrations, and layout of the Noam Chomsky interview; There are these large streams of culture and, often, they flow into the same river thanks to Billups Allen, Amy Shapiro, and Brendan Cosgrove for the *Films of Pedro Almodovar* article, illustrations, and graphic design; Mummy-zombie, drunk penguin thanks to Marcos Siref for his *Razorcake Records* illustration; Let's brass tack it. We're looking to celebrate that one percent that makes the other ninety-nine percent seem not so great thanks to the following reviewers of records, books, zines, and DVDs: Bryan Static, Matt Average, Joe Evans III, Ryan Horky, CT Terry, The Lord Kveldulfr, Craven Rock, MP Johnson, Kristen K., Mike Frame, Donloveshimselfsomeswedishhardcore, Kurt Morris, Billups Allen, Ty Stranglehold, Rene Navarro, Adrian Salas, Art Ettinger, Nick Toerner, Dave Williams, Sean Koepenick, Juan Espinosa, Samantha Beerhouse, Vincent Battilana, Keith Rosson, Jimmy Alvarado, Norb, Jake Shut, Speedway Randy, Reyan Ali, Sean Stewart, Lauren Trout, Andy Conway, Steve Hart, Adrian Chi; "Thanks for coming in. Here's what we've got..." and prufreeding thankx to the following folks for helping out at HQ: Matt Average, Donlabelsupsidedown, Rene Navarro, Samantha Beerhouse, Adrian Salas, Josh Robles, Josh Rosa, Juan Espinosa, Matt Braun, Lisa Weiss, Kari Hamanaka, Vincent Battilana, Megan Pants, and Joe Dana; Chris Baxter should get a medal for making us look right spiffy for all his Photoshop help. Thanks, Chris; "I was drunk. I'm sorry. I don't think you're a d-bag" thanks to Jeff Proctor and Samantha Beerhouse for monitoring *Razorcake's* social networking doohickeys that really should come with breathalyzers; As always, thanks to Mary Clare Stevens for her support; Super-special thanks to Matt's Incredible for being instrumental in *Razorcake* getting its first grant.



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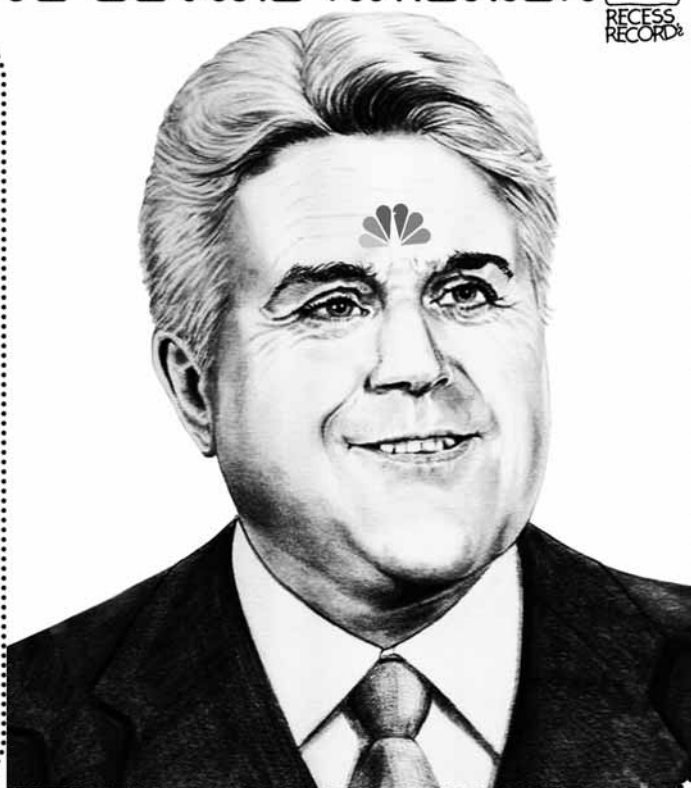
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# RAZORCAKE

Issue #57 August / September 2010

PO Box 42129  
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Individual opinions expressed within are not necessarily those of Razorcake/Gorsky Press, Inc.

**Razorcake/ Gorsky, Inc. Board of Directors** are: Todd Taylor, Sean Carswell, Dan Clarke, Katy Spining, Leo Emil Tober III, Catherine Casada Hornberger, and Daryl Gussin.

**This issue of Razorcake and [www.razorcake.org](http://www.razorcake.org) were put together by:** Todd Taylor, Daryl Gussin, Sean Carswell, Skinny Dan, Katy Spining, Megan Pants, Matt Braun, James

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"Is this the punk song about puking or is this the punk song about stabbing?" -Mike Faloon, *The Hanging Gardens of Split Rock*



This issue of *Razorcake* is made possible in part by a grant from the City of Los Angeles, Department of Cultural Affairs.





## A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

SEAN CARSWELL

**“I like being demonized.”**

# GRRRL CAN'T HELP IT

Strangely enough, I can still remember buying my first Bikini Kill record. It was in Vinyl Fever in Tallahassee, Florida sometime in early '92. My buddy Pete and I were flipping through records and Pete pulled out Bikini Kill. He said, “You’ll like this. It’s kinda like the Butthole Surfers.” I remember looking at the picture on the cover: the grrrls looking so geeky and tough, the trails of light following the bassist as she moved faster than the camera’s shutter. I checked the track listing and liked how the words looked like they’d been etched into the cover with some kind of makeshift blade. So I chanced the six bucks and picked up the record.

Of course, there’s problems with this memory. First, I also remember that my record player was stolen when I was away for Christmas in '91, and I didn’t buy a new one for a couple of years. This means I would’ve been flipping through CDs at the time, not records. Also, that Bikini Kill album came out in June of '92 and I moved away from Tallahassee in May of '92.

Clearly, my memory rejects the tyranny of chronological time and verifiable facts. It will reconstruct the past as it sees fit.

I also remember there being a kind of conventional wisdom around the guys in the Tallahassee music scene at the time. It went like this: Wear a Bikini Kill T-shirt and punk rock girls will dig you. I never actually tested this wisdom. I rarely had enough money to buy T-shirts at shows and Bikini Kill didn’t come through Tallahassee when I lived there. I think my memory may have made up this conventional wisdom.

I bring this up because, lately, I’ve been trying to remember the riot grrrl movement firsthand. I should be able to remember it. I was alive then. I was in college. A few of my closest friends were in bands. I went out to shows at least two or three nights a week. A lot of the bands I saw had women in them. I knew some of those women. I knew most of the deejays at the university radio station. My next door neighbor was the station manager. Because we shared a porch, we spent a fair amount of time on that porch listening to new music. So I was in the know.

I also have a lot of the music, and I’ve had it for so long that I don’t remember buying it. If I didn’t buy that Bikini Kill record at Vinyl Fever in '92, I must’ve got it somewhere in Atlanta a couple of years later. Pete lived there then, too. Maybe that conversation

happened at Criminal Records in '94 instead. And, of course, there’s other stuff that I have around. I have a Kill Rock Stars comp that’s so old it has Courtney Love the band on it. (If you’re like just about everyone else, you probably didn’t know or forgot that before Courtney Love was the stage name of Courtney Harrison, it was a band featuring indie rockers who were not named Courtney and did not marry anyone in Nirvana.) I still have mix tapes so old they may fall apart the next time I try to play them, and they’re full of riot grrrl bands. I have CDs that are equally old and equally representative. I have more Sleater-Kinney albums than I want to admit to in the pages of *Razercake*. And how many, exactly, is that? Three. I still listen to two of them regularly. Don’t judge me. At least one of the members of the band—I’m not sure if it was Sleater or Kinney—wanted to be my Joey Ramone.

So what do I remember firsthand about the riot grrrl movement? Only that I went to see L7 in the spring of '92. This I remember clearly because there’d been a girl in my freshman English class who I’d had a crush on, but she had a boyfriend. Over the next few years, I’d see her on campus and she was fun to hang out with, but she still had that boyfriend. I ran into her again while I was walking over to see L7 and not only did she have no plans for the night, but she was up for walking over to the show with me. And did she still have that boyfriend? No, she did not.

L7 must have put on a hell of a show because I remember it. I remember a packed house and everyone going nuts. I remember leaving the show sweaty and the girl I went to the show with leaving sweaty and a mist rising up from her when she stepped into the cold night air. I remember exactly the way she looked at that moment, but I don’t remember a grrrl revolution. I’m not even sure if we can lump L7 in with riot grrrl.

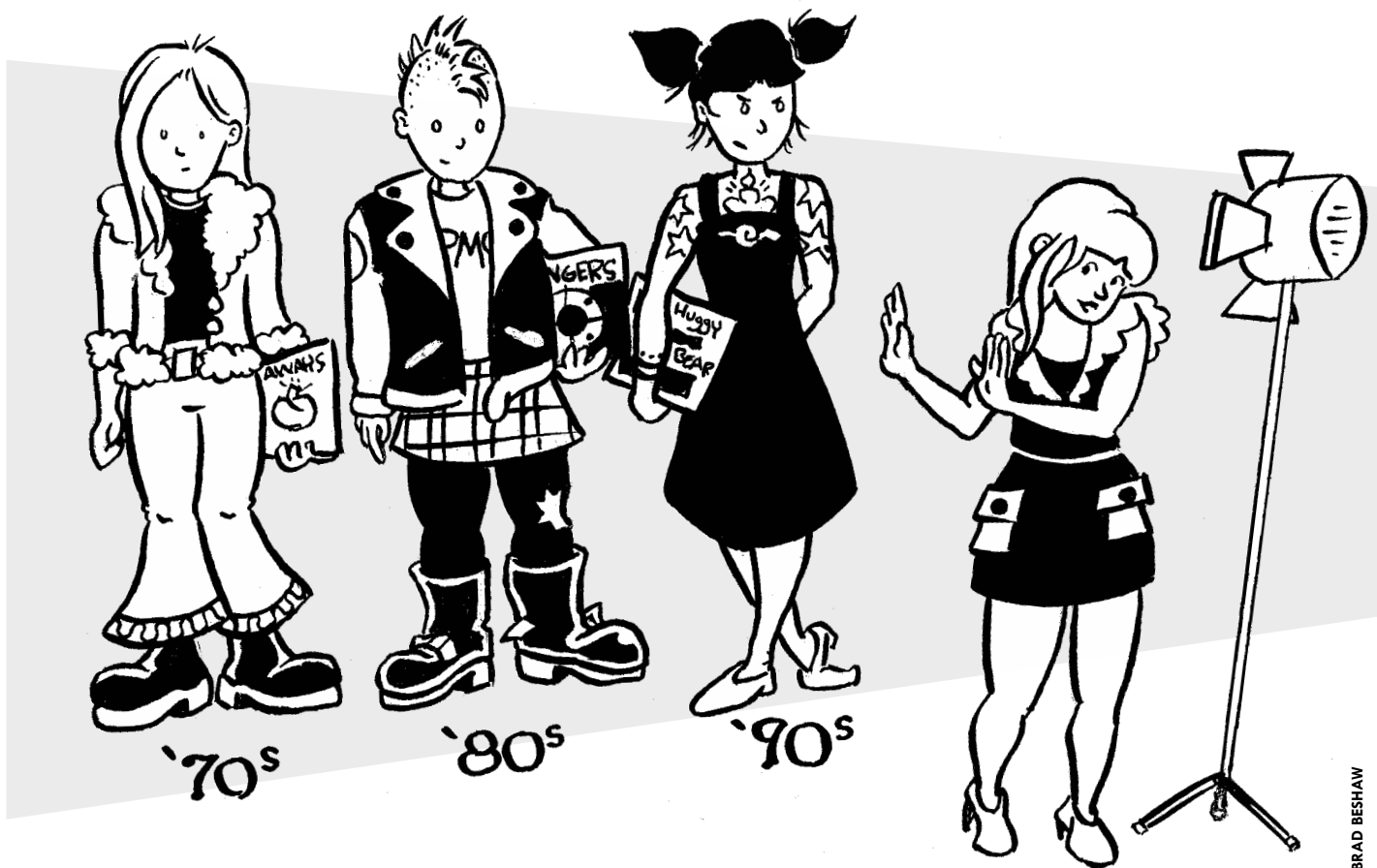
Regardless, I start here to make one simple point: I’m not the person to write the history of riot grrrl. Even though I was around at the time, I barely remember it, and what I do remember is highly questionable. I can’t even write about it without making lame jokes that suggest I don’t know that no one in Sleater-Kinney was named Sleater or Kinney. This doesn’t mean, of course, that the movement is insignificant. It’s not. It’s important. It opened the door for a lot of

young women to create and foster an exciting and productive community. It invited more women onto the stage and into punk rock. It helped a lot of women take steps toward becoming empowered.

I’ve been thinking about it, though, because I’ve seen riot grrrl coming back. I haven’t seen it coming back in the cool way, with new grrrl bands and zines and music festivals. Instead, it’s returning in the form of retrospectives—articles written by people whose memory of the movement is even more questionable than mine. The articles all follow the same pattern: punk rock had no room for women; women started their own bands (but apparently only three of them); Olympia, Washington, and Washington, DC became the epicenters for women who wrote “slut” on their arms and went to grrrl shows and traded zines; magazines like *Sassy* and *People* wrote articles about them; Kathleen Hanna declared a media blackout; the movement continued for another year, and then the founders either became more sophisticated (read: less punk, more indie rock) or more legitimately famous (read: toured as Pearl Jam’s opening act).

These retrospectives bother me for a few reasons. The first is because they’re all the same. And by all following the same pattern, they suggest that this is the objective history of a movement, which it’s not. Though it seeks to be a definitive history, it ignores a lot. It ignores that a lot of punk rock women had taken the stage before riot grrrl. For a decade prior, women had been instrumental in creating the L.A. punk scene. Bands like The Bags, Alley Cats, The Brat, and X gave a real voice to women in punk long before Bratmobile did. All-female bands like The Runaways and The Go-Go’s had somewhat normalized the idea of women playing their own instruments before most grrrls had gotten out of elementary school. I don’t point this out to demean what riot grrrls did. I just want to point out that riot grrrl was an evolutionary stage for women in punk, not the completely original phenomenon that these retrospectives paint it as.

Another problem with these retrospectives is the context in which they’re emerging. Of course there are problems when the mainstream media tackles anything that has to do with punk rock. That goes without saying. Instead, I want to look at a recent article in *Bust Magazine*, because *Bust* is supposed to



## THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE DEFINITIVE VOICES ARE LARGELY IGNORANT WHILE THE REAL, HONEST VOICES ARE LARGELY IGNORED.

be an alternative to the mainstream media. They started out as a zine. Riot grrrl in no small way blazed the trail for them, and in their latest issue they have a retrospective of riot grrrl. This comes in their music-themed issue. This particular issue has a movie star on the cover. This movie star has her own band. You've probably heard her music; it's in a commercial for cotton. Beyond the movie star, *Bust* features four other women in music: Joan Jett, Kathleen Hanna, Jill Scott, and Wanda Jackson because, apparently, all the women in music either are movie stars or began their careers more than twenty years ago. Hardly a word is dedicated to women in new, current bands, though there is a fashion spread of indie rock women dressed in their favorite outfits.

This is where *Bust* has taken the trail that riot grrrl blazed for them.

What bugged me most about the retrospective, though, is not that they

demonized white male punk rockers (because I like being demonized). It's not that they portrayed riot grrrl as the first all-girl bands while also running interviews with Joan Jett and Cherie Currie—who were in an all-girl band fifteen years before riot grrrl—in the same issue. It's not that they're so clearly clueless about contemporary music. What bugs me is that in 2005, Jennifer Whiteford came out with the novel *Grrrl*, which, though it's fiction, is a more real, honest, and reliable history of the riot grrrl movement than any other publication I've read. Part of what makes it so great is that Whiteford writes from a personal perspective. It shows what it was like for one particular person in one particular place at one particular time while amazing things were happening and she was a part of them. She creates no hierarchies. She does not pretend to be definitive. Instead, she writes a narrative that builds on the empowerment of riot grrrl. It's a narrative that is empowering

itself. And though it takes place in the past, it looks forward to new possibilities for women in the twenty-first century. In short, she does the opposite of what *Bust* and all of these other retrospectives do.

I'd be lying if I said that it doesn't bug me that *Bust* did not review *Grrrl*, even though the book's publisher sent them two review copies and two personalized cover letters (I know this because I'm the publisher and I did it), and the book is exactly the kind of thing *Bust* readers are looking for. What really bugs me is how this *Bust* feature demonstrates the way we construct our shared pasts and the history of resistance movements: The people who have the definitive voices are largely ignorant while the real, honest voices are largely ignored.

—Sean Carswell







# LAZY MICK

JIM RULAND

**“Both seriously  
shitty and  
incredibly  
awesome.”**

## In Praise of Shitty Museums Part 2

The hallmark of a shitty museum is a bold superiority claim: World's Largest Thermometer (Baker, California), World's Biggest Ball of Twine (Cawker City, Kansas), World's Largest Ballpoint Pen Collection (Dinslaken, Germany), etc. I'm not particularly interested in pens, twine, or thermometers, but add the title "World's Largest" to it, and I admit my curiosity is piqued. Of course, these "museums" tend not to be museums at all, but roadside attractions. (There's a convenient website that lists them all called [www.worldslargestthings.com](http://www.worldslargestthings.com).) I enjoy roadside attractions as much as the next person, but a giant digital thermometer in the desert does not a museum make. So what exactly is a museum?

A museum is a collection of interesting items gathered together for a specific purpose. However, the notion of a museum as a public institution that preserves works of art, history, or science is a relatively modern one. The first museums emerged in the sixteenth century. Wealthy travelers put their collections of curiosities on display. In these "wonder cabinets" pigmy skeletons sat alongside Japanese erotica, a stuffed crocodile shared a shelf with a fetus preserved in a jar. The collections displayed the eccentric taste, vast wealth, and experiences in the world all in one go. As the popularity of wonder cabinets grew, they became less about the vision of the collector and more about the accumulation of weird shit for people to gawk at. When people started getting creeped out by babies in jars, an educational component was introduced—and *voilà*—the modern museum was born.

In my view, a museum ought to do three things: 1) adhere to a vision, 2) be a true collection, i.e. not just one thing, and 3) be interesting. So it was with mixed feelings that my wife and I pulled off of Highway 60 in Superior, Arizona, to have a look at the World's Smallest Museum.

(I know what you're thinking: What the fuck were you doing in Arizona? My wife and I passed through Arizona to get to New Mexico, and we spent as much time as possible on sovereign lands of various Native American tribes so as to avoid spending money in Arizona territory. We did this to protest Governor Jan Brewer's passing of Senate Bill 1070 into law. SB 1070 is outrageously bigoted, fiscally stupid, and quite possibly unconstitutional. While it's unfortunate that so many ethical, intelligent

Arizonans are suffering financially as a result of the boycott, they can rectify this situation by voting Brewer and other extremists out of office. Giddy up.)

On the outskirts of Superior, which is about sixty-five miles east of Phoenix in remote Pinal County, we'd stopped to read a road marker in front of Picket Post Mountain, an unusually rugged-looking mountain that rises 2,000 feet from the desert floor. The marker serves as the final resting place for a four-legged creature, whose carcass had been left there for reasons unknown. An ominous introduction to Superior...

The town of Superior sits at the base of Apache Leap Mountain, which takes its name from a grim scene during the Indian Wars. During a skirmish between Apaches and government troops, the cavalry forced seventy-five warriors onto a rock ledge high up on the mountain—a tactic Governor Brewer would like to duplicate with illegal aliens and push them all back over the border. Rather than surrender, the Apaches leaped to their deaths.

With the Indians out of the way, prospectors began mining operations, which lasted for over 120 years. Today, it's a one-horse town of about 3,000 people, nearly seventy percent of which are Latinos, where nothing much ever happens, and nothing much ever will, making it the perfect place for The World's Smallest Museum, which is both seriously shitty and incredibly awesome.

The World's Smallest Museum can be found in the parking lot of the Buckboard City Café at the intersection of Waterfall Avenue and Memory Lane. These aren't real roads, of course, and there is no waterfall on the property, just a fountain made out of old truck tires. A tower of tires rise from a rubber monstrosity the size of a hot tub, but the water wasn't flowing during our visit.

So just how small is The World's Smallest Museum? The World's Smallest Museum is so small that the sign for The World's Smallest Museum is larger than the actual museum. The World's Smallest Museum is 134 square feet, which is pretty damn small. The World's Smallest Museum is little more than a shed with an A-frame roof shingled with empty aluminum beer cans. Seriously. That's how spectacularly awesome this place is.

The World's Smallest Museum's interior features ten display cases, five on each side of The World's Smallest Museum single

passageway, leaving little more than fifty square feet for visitors. When you peer into The World's Smallest Museum from the front stoop, the first thing you see is the fence opposite the exit of The World's Smallest Museum. Its smallness is disorienting.

The sign for The World's Smallest Museum reads "Artifacts of Ordinary Life," which is museum-speak for "a whole bunch of crap you already have in your house." Because I didn't grow up in a tiny mining town in the Arizona-Sonora desert, the artifacts are anything but ordinary. But the sign goes a long way toward managing the visitor's expectations.

A sampling of items you'll find in The World's Smallest Museum:

\*Newspaper clippings from 1977 when Clint Eastwood was in town to film *The Gauntlet*. This apparently was big news. Other movies with locations shot in Superior include *How the West Was Won*, which featured John Wayne and Jimmy Stewart; Oliver Stone's *U Turn*; and Scarlett Johansson's breakout role in the David Arquette masterpiece *Eight Legged Freaks*.

\*An exhibit titled "From the Quill to the Information Age" i.e. a timeline of writing implements. This includes a quill (duh), a box of Ticonderoga pencils, a ballpoint pen, a Corona typewriter, a mimeograph machine, and a Compaq computer from 1984, complete with floppy disks, marking the end of the Information Age and the beginning of the Too Much Information Age.

\*The World's Largest Fake Zippo Lighter: This one is pretty self-explanatory: a fake lighter about a foot tall perched on old-time cracker and oatmeal tins. Why is The World's Largest Fake Zippo Lighter presented against a sky blue backdrop complete with puffy clouds? It's a mystery.

\*Political memorabilia from various Arizona elections. Campaign buttons, political stickers, and a shitload of Barry Goldwater swag. The highlight of this is a signed letter from Senator John F. Kennedy, with a photo of Senator McCain coming in at a distant second.

\*Mining gear from yesteryear, most of which I couldn't identify, much less figure out what it's for, that was used at the Magma Mine, a copper mine that was in operation from 1910-1996, and was previously the Silver Queen, which operated from 1875 to 1909.



JACKIE RUSTED

**The World's Smallest Museum is little more than a shed with an A-frame roof shingled with empty aluminum beer cans. Seriously.**

\*Household implements of the homesteaders: Washboards, iron presses, water pitchers, coffee pots, and assorted rusty junk that makes you grateful to be living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

\*The World's Largest Piece of Chalk. My search for The World's Largest Chalkboard turned up empty. An opportunity for a roadside entrepreneur?

\*Apache Leap Tears. A unique form of obsidian mined in Superior. These translucent fragments cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

\*Profile of Celia Mattie Blaylock, Wyatt Earp's second wife. Mattie's lawman husband shackled up with another woman, who was most likely a prostitute, around the time he and Doc Holliday shot up the Clanton gang. After Earp abandoned her, Blaylock went to

Globe to work with a girl named Big Nose Kate in the dance halls. She later moved to Superior, which was then a silver boom town, where she committed suicide by overdosing on alcohol and laudanum. Her gravesite is routinely vandalized.

\*And the rock and roll moment you've been waiting for... In between a stack of transistor radios and a record player, a photograph of proud son of Arizona, Alice Cooper, rocking out live in concert.

The most charming thing about The World's Smallest Museum is the extent to which The World's Smallest Museum refuses to take itself seriously. (As if the beer can roof isn't a huge honking clue.) But The World's Smallest Museum is more than a bunch of junk jumbled together in an interesting way. This isn't the World's Smallest Swap Meet.

While the display cases are well-organized and the labels are clearly typed and correctly spelled, many of the cabinets look like they haven't been opened since the last century. Some of the artifacts of the ordinary, especially those on the bottom shelf, are covered in an extraordinary layer of dust.

Yet The World's Smallest Museum exhibits a stringent commitment to the idiosyncratic worldview of its proprietor, whoever that may be. The World's Smallest Museum is a true cabinet of curiosities. And unlike so many other museums, The World's Smallest Museum's mission is to be interesting as opposed to educational — for five minutes at least, which is four minutes and forty-five seconds longer than it takes to walk through it.

—Jim Ruland





## MONSTER OF FUN

AMY ADOYZIE

**“The travel scars that have left me wiser and with a couple good stories to tell.”**

# Passport Envy

The eyes are restless from the fatigue of staring at an unmoving landscape. The legs itch, muscles twitch in between the tibia and the upholstered surface it leans against. It's wanderlust simmering and the only cure is to give in, to strap that pack to your back, put one foot in front of the other, and let your eyes drink in every dashed yellow line in the middle of the road.

I blame my legs. These non-proportionate stumps that move me around. They loathe when I sit around too much and love it when I push them too hard. Wanderlust is insatiable, and my legs gobble it up. One in front of the other, marching forward because they know no other way. In all my travels throughout Asia—from southern China to the beaches of Vietnam or the mountains of Nepal to the capitol of India—there has been some epic adventuring, but I've also faced my share of tribulations. Since *sharing is caring*, I would like to tell ya'lls about some of my low-lights so you can learn from my misadventures with these travel tippees.

There's the obvious:

Pack a pair of flip-flops. As un-punk rock as they may be, they will save you from cooties in shared showers and cool your toes when you wanna relax. Don't worry about bringing a pillowcase for hostel beds, resting your head on one of your t-shirts will save you room in your pack. I always bring issues of *Razorcake* to read on the road and leave them in hostel lobbies or music shops in places I know they've never seen it. And I never leave without a passport pouch that I tuck into my jeans next to my sweaty crotch cash.

If you're traveling the People's Republic of China, don't buy souvenirs that you can buy at your local Chinatown USA (which is most everything). Bargain at every chance. Most shopkeepers will give you an opening price that is at least twice as much as it's worth, if not more. But know that there's a fine line between being fair and being brutal, because chances are that if you're reading this magazine you're better off than a street vendor in Mui Ne, Vietnam and you spend three bucks for a pint of beer all the time, so what's it worth arguing about it with a shop keeper? Though, hypocritically, some of my

proudest shopping moments have been when a shop owner has angrily and begrudgingly agreed to sell something to me. (Though, in my defense, living on volunteer stipends in developing countries will drive you batty and make you feel entitled.) And speaking of monies, always check the big bills you get in return to make sure they're not counterfeit.

Street food will make you sick, but it's worth it. Check bottled water caps to be sure they weren't shoddily soldered back on after being refilled with dirty tap water. A small squeeze tube of hand sanitizer will ease your mind. You'll get used to that medicinal smell and start to think it makes your food taste better.

And there are the travel scars that have left me wiser with a couple good stories to tell:

Laos is the only landlocked country in Southeast Asia and is usually forgotten on itineraries. Its tourism industry is still growing its legs and learning to stand on them. The easiest way to make money is to give the kids what they want, and that's usually stuff that'll fuck them up.

Ironically, even though Laos is landlocked, it's the only country I've traveled to where I've gone tubin' down a slow-moving river. It's a lot like basking in the sun with my limbs draped over an inner tube, floating along the Sandy River in Portland, except in Vang Vieng there are middle-aged Laotian women squatted on makeshift mini-docks hawking Beer Laos at your lazy drifting body. Naturally, Vang Vieng needs to offer a hearty post-tubing recreational substance abuse.

Every restaurant has a not-so-hidden “Special Menu” with three mainstays:

Happy Shake with whiskey and fruit  
Magic Mushroom Shake or Tea  
Opium Tea

Then further down the same sheet, scrawled in loose handwriting it offers:

Happy Garlic bread  
Happy Pizza  
Happy Pancake  
Magic Mushroom Pizza

I especially love how the menu devolves and gets straight to the point at the bottom where it reads:

A bag of weed

A bag of mushrooms

A bag of opium

There's something beyond sketchy about buying a bag of illegal substances off a menu, so I opted for Magic Mushroom Shake. I could taste the small flecks of mushrooms that were blended into my banana shake and sat back into the loungey restaurant stall and waited.

The high was weak and gave me a headache. I crawled into my hostel bed and hoped to sleep it away. I felt fine the next morning when I boarded a bus to the capitol city, Vientiane, but was soon burping up a rotten egg smell and knew immediately that traveler's diarrhea was about to commence.

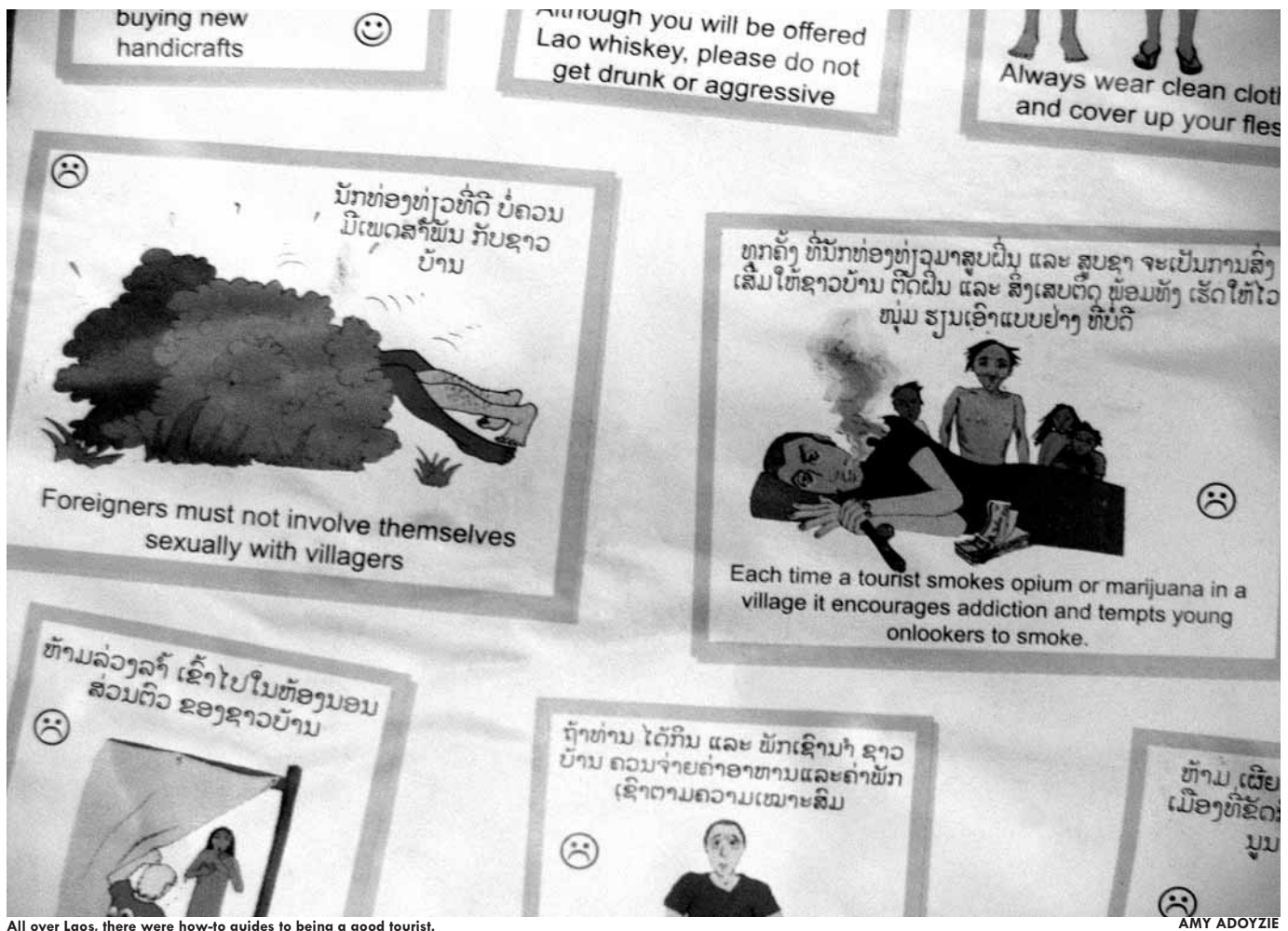
My Vientiane hostel felt like a three story building that had been haphazardly converted into a five-storied guesthouse with narrow and steep stairways and wobbly landings. There were only two toilets in the entire building and my room was nearest to the first floor bathroom that housed a toilet without a toilet seat. I had never wished for a squatty toilet so much in my life.

Lesson learned: If you're going to order off the “Special Menu,” make sure a.) you don't have a five-hour un-air conditioned bus ride the next day and b.) book a room with its own toilet (and toilet seat).

I am a moderately fit person with very sensitive joints. I was reminded of this on a forty-five mile trek through the Annapurna Circuit in Nepal when I wanted to rip out my left knee at the end of the four-day hike. Every step I took during that last morning was painful; it felt akin to being stabbed in my knee every time I took a step. I started to lag behind and teared up at the thought that I would have to endure it until the sun set again.

Even though all I wanted to do was to curl up into a ball right on that trail, I refrained from collapsing and asked everyone around me if they had Ibuprofen. I must have had about a dozen to get through the day before collapsing in a van and ingesting more sleeping pills to numb all the other parts of my body.

Lesson learned: If I were a smarter person, I'd say that the lesson learned from this trip was to know and understand your



All over Laos, there were how-to guides to being a good tourist.

AMY ADOYZIE

# Street food will make you sick, but it's worth it.

physical limitations, but fuck that. If I let my own physicality limit my movement, I'd go nowhere (have you seen my stumpy legs lately?). Instead, my lesson learned from this trip was: Pack painkillers. If you neglect to do so, ask everyone you encounter if they have any. Ask directions to the nearest pharmacy, because even if it's a hole in the wall and looks like a shoddy American swap meet stall—they will have some generic Ibuprofen to numb your pain away.

Hong Kong during peak season is nowhere to be if you don't have money. Every cheap hostel was booked up and, short of sleeping at bus terminals or in neighborhood parks, Daniel and I had no idea what to do. That's when desperation went into overdrive and we found ourselves haggling for rooms at places that I've

lovingly dubbed as "hooker hotels." These are small rooms that are rented out by the hour, but might sometimes offer a nightly rate with check-in at 10 PM and check-out is sharply at 8:00 AM. It may not seem so bad in hindsight, but when you're exhausted from working to find a room all day and finally do find one, all you wanna do is lay in it. Instead, you have to busy yourself and think of all the people who are fucking in it before you can even check in to sleep in it.

When you're finally laying in your heart-shaped bed, try to ignore the condoms on the counters, the mirror on the ceiling, the stream of '80s porn on every other television channel and the moaning and hollerin' of the other patrons. You may also be awakened throughout the night from the ring of the doorbell as, you know, the other rooms are being rented by the hour.

Lesson learned: Even establishments that rent rooms by the hour might offer nightly rates; you should inquire with the management.

I've got a few more low-lights that might help ya'll out, but it'll have to wait for another time. And, to be honest, even the down time during trips can be awesome in and of themselves if you handle them right.

And by "handling it right" I mean: Always bring a small pack of tissue paper. It'll save your ass literally and metaphorically.

—Amy Adoyzie  
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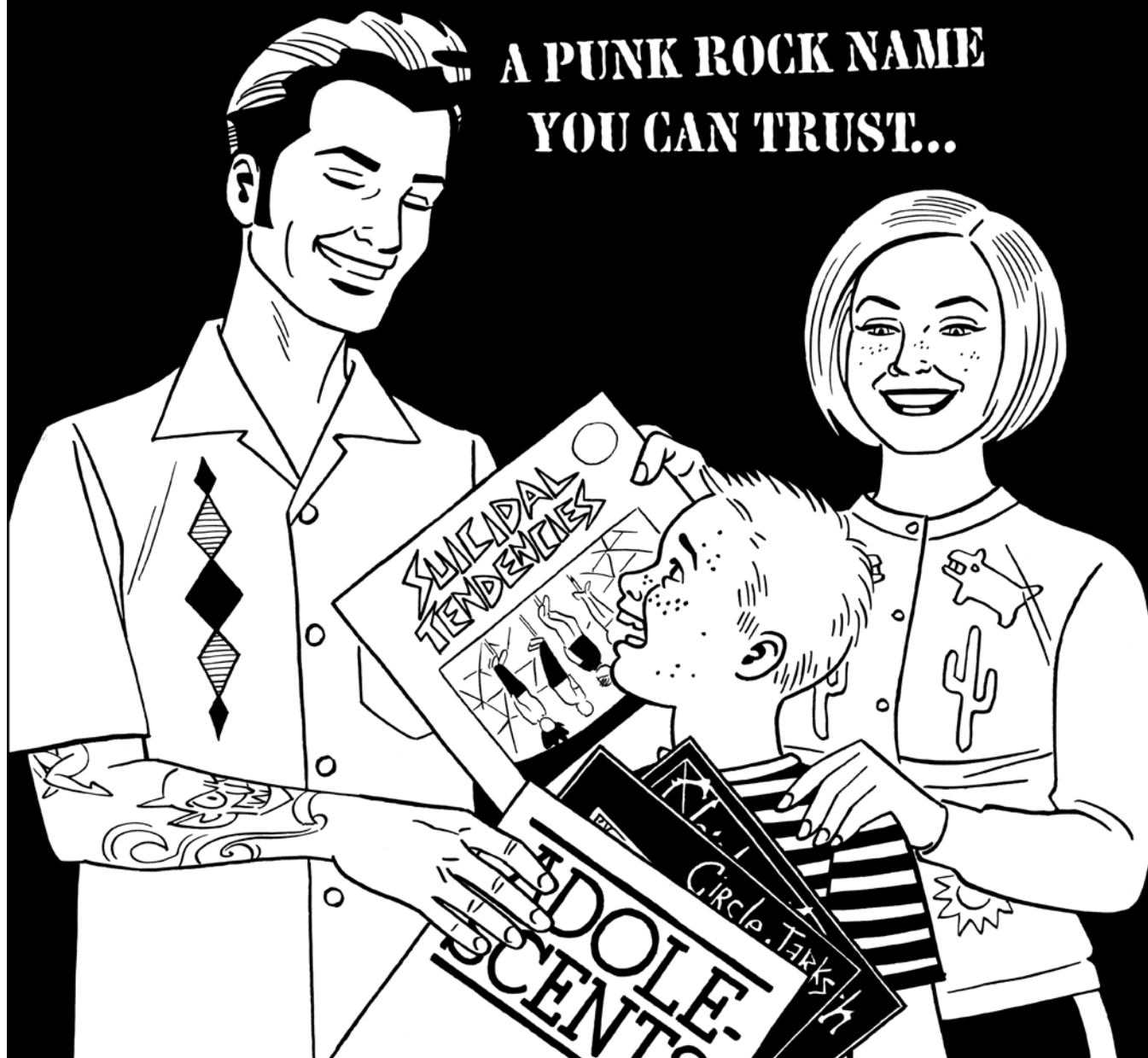






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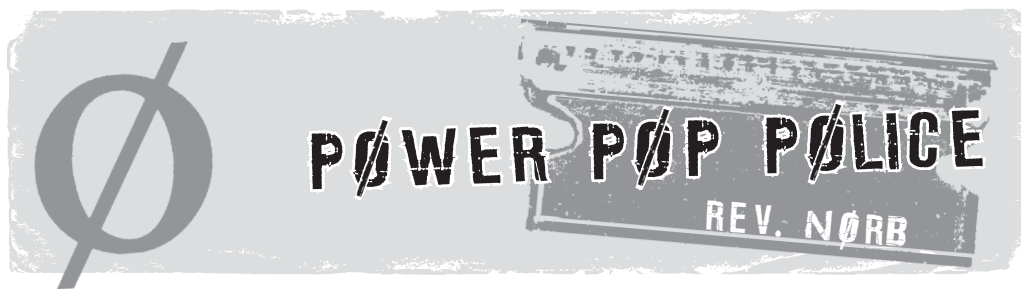


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**"I suspect the  
waggling finger  
of moron-dom  
is pointing  
largely inward"**

# WHO'S GOT THE 10½???

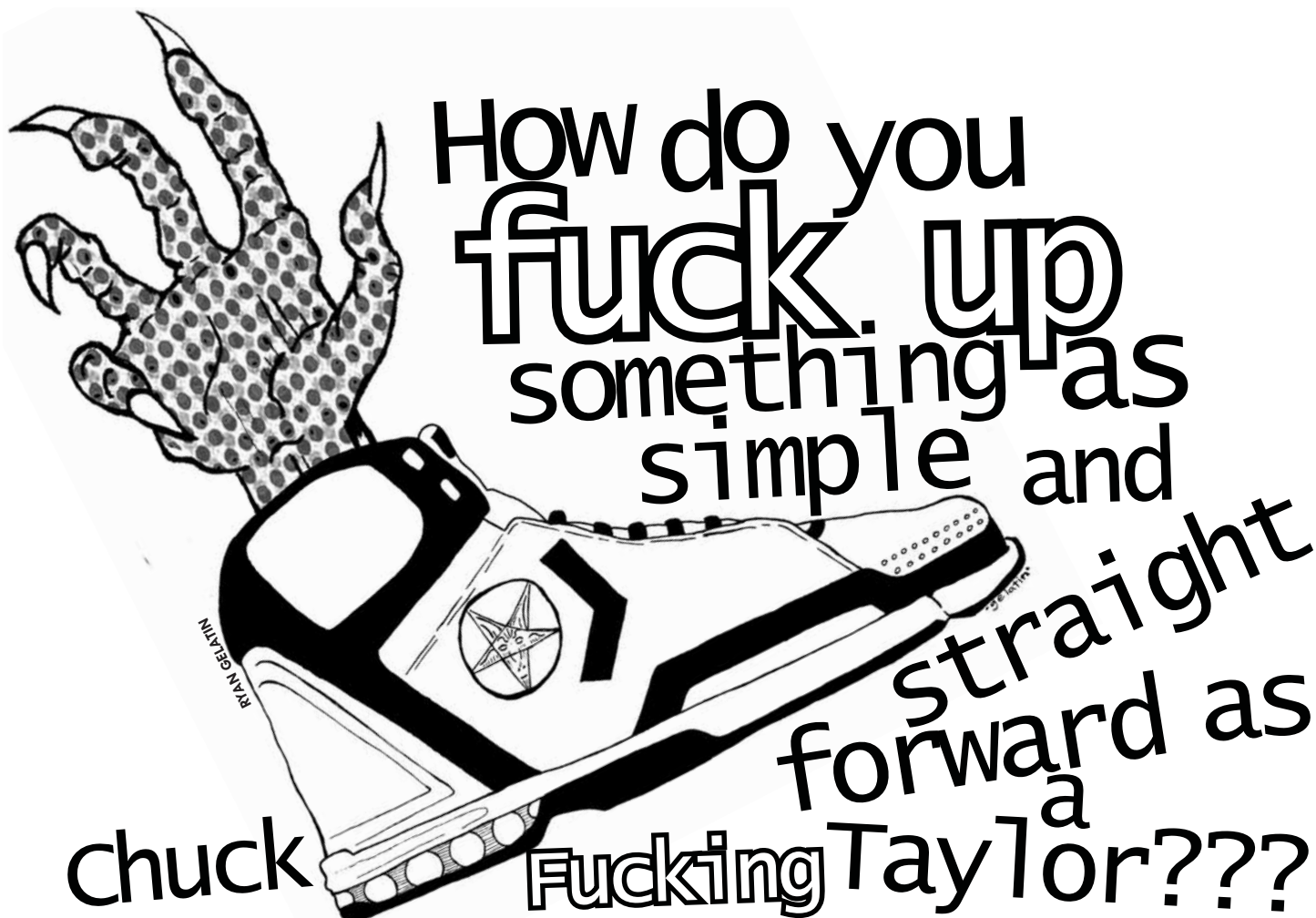
or

## NIKE® A GO-GO; CONVERSE® A GONE-GONE

So i'm walking through a parking lot in my new pair of Converse® Weapon™ EVOs, because, after three years of searching, i have finally come to grips with the fact that they don't make Converse® All-Star 2000™'s any more ((i have flat feet, thus can't really wear regular ol' Chuck Taylors day in and day out without the shoe's pancake-like sole wreaking havoc with my arches. The All-Star 2000™, however, was a huge white leather basketball shoe built on a gigantic sole somewhat reminiscent of a 1968 Corvette™ [[both in design and style]]. They were, quite frankly, Earth's Perfect Shoe. And, because Earth sucks nuts, Earth doesn't make them any more. Figures.)). After three years of searching, the Weapon EVO™ was the nearest All-Star 2000™ substitute i could sniff out. I'm not sure what is supposed to be so EVO about them ((Q: *Are We Not Shoes? A: We Are EVO!*)); i tend to suspect that EVO is highly refined marketing code for "so stiff and unforgiving, you'll feel like your ankles are stuck into the holes of miniature wooden outhouse seats—except, of course, that miniature wooden outhouses would have something at least halfway soft at the bottom." Worse yet, the toes of the shoes bend up in some stiff, weird way when i walk, making it feel like someone is slamming a window down on my toes with every step i take. I mean, WHAT THE FUCK?? Does anybody actually, i don't know, PUT THESE SHOES ON before they're marketed? Who the fuck wants to feel a window slamming on their toes every time they take a step? ((CUT TO a rear-right shot of a naked man, mid-forties, standing on a windowsill, jerking off. Standing outside the window is that frumpy Asian housekeeper from *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*. Head back, the man yells "AGAIN, MEI FUN!!!" She dutifully slams the window down on his toes)) I mean, HOW DO YOU NOT NOTICE THAT THE SHOES ARE COMPLETELY UNWEARABLE??? How did i get myself into such a predicament??? And how has The American Footwear Situation fallen to such an untenable nadir??? Like any good American, i blame

Nike® ((and possibly Sarah Palin)). I mean, i did MY part—when the All-Star 2000™ came out ((in, uh, 2000, go figure)), i loved them so much, i bought four pairs of 'em, and rotated shoes for the next EIGHT YEARS. By 2008, i had walked huge cannonball holes through them all and could not, for love nor money, find a new pair of All-Star 2000™s, nor any other shoe even vaguely acceptable. I bothered shoe store owners. I wrote to the company, ending all communications with the sad-but-true-plea of "I owned 10,149 shares of your stock before your last bankruptcy so you'd better be nice to me." No luck. There are no size eleven Converse® All-Star 2000™'s to be found, anywhere on this planet, at any price. What seemed like mildly wacky excess in 2000—buying four fricking pairs of the same goddamn shoe—now seems like an amazing lack of foresight on my part, as i probably should have bought sixty-five pairs, instead, which, at a pair a year, would take me to either A) Death, B) Wheelchair-bound dotage, or C) My George Jetson personal hovercraft years. DAMMIT, I NEED THESE SHOES. Contrary to what Nike™ appears to believe, i have no interest in owning the type of shoe fourteen-year-old white kids wear in order to look more like eighteen-year-old black kids—most basketball shoes today look like the shoe-ly equivalent of that car Homer Simpson designed for his half-brother, Danny DeVito. I dropped fifty clams on these Weapon EVO's, simply because they were the closest thing to All-Star 2000's i could find after two years of looking, and, dude, these things blow goat! Again, i blame Nike®. Nike® bought Converse® after the second bankruptcy, somewhere at the beginning of the last decade. Nike® are morons ((then again, i bought 10,149 shares of Converse® stock BEFORE the second bankruptcy—stock which is now completely worthless [[well, i shouldn't say COMPLETELY worthless—i did receive a penny from E\*Trade™ when i finally liquidated my 10,149 shares of Converse® stock. Huzzah! Chiclets™ for all!]]. I suspect the waggling

finger of moron-dom is pointing largely inward)). I mean, how the fuck do you fuck up fucking CONVERSE®, FOR FUCK'S SAKE??? I mean, Nike®—in their infinite, cutting-edge wisdom—has now done away with the nonsense known as the eyelet ((aka "the little hole you poke the laces through")), opting instead for some kinda fabric loops stitched on the underside of the lace-up parts of the shoes. Boy, can't see any potential problems with THAT design, no sir! "*Let's see...i'll pass a shoelace thru this little fabric loop, then i'll pull on the shoelace, exerting large amounts of force directly on the loop! Then i'll go run around, so my foot can exert constant pressure on the laces, which will, in turn, exert constant pressure on the little fabric loopy things! NOTHING WILL EVER GO WRONG WITH THIS SETUP!!! IT'S FOOLPROOF!*" Beats me; i've been wearing shoes for forty-four years, and i've never once had an eyelet malfunction on me. They really don't seem like a bad design idea. Double bah. Small wonder i hadn't bought new shoes since Y2K. As i continue to trudge on in my Nonverse® Weapon EVO's, the window-slammng effect lessens for my right foot. Now it only feels like someone is slamming a window on my left toes; my right foot just feels like someone is beating the back of my ankle with a chair leg ((CUT BACK to the *Courtship of Eddie's Father* housekeeper, now dutifully and expressionlessly whaling the tar out of the guy's ankle with a table leg)). Here at Nonverse®, our high-tech shoes are continually adapting to your feet, finding new and ever-changing ways to deliver pain to new and ever-changing areas of your feet! Luckily, i had hedged my bets somewhat with the Weapon EVO's, deciding that, along with said foot-mangling goodness, i'd also need something with a greater degree of...i dunno...*flaccidity*, so i also mailordered a pair of purple Converse® "Poorman's" Weapons ((PUNK!)), which are sort of a suede Chuck Taylor® that looks like the Converse Weapon ((one star and then sort of a "greater than" or "less than" sign, depending



on your sexual orientation)), on crappy ol' regular Chuck soles. As opposed to the Weapon EVO®, the Poorman's Weapons are actually quite comfortable. *Too* comfortable, in fact. They make me feel kinda...well...*floppy*, like i'm wearing Hush Puppies® or Van's™ or some other kinda douchebag shoe. But you know those two little grommets, or whatever the hell they're called—the two little metal rings down by the arch of a normal Chuck Taylor®, that kinda let the air in and out? Well, the marketing geniuses at Nike® latched onto that particular design element of the Chuck Taylor®, so now, any time you buy a pair of Chucks, it comes in a cool shoebox with those two little grommets on the side. *Brand identification!* It's really great that the Nike® brain-trust realized that that was an important Chuck Taylor® design element, and replicated it on their shoeboxes. BUT NEXT TIME, YOU FUCKING CRACKHEADS, REMEMBER TO PUT THE FUCKING GROMMETS ON THE GODDAMN SHOES, TOO!!! Yes. That's right. They put the little venty-rings on the BOX and NOT ON THE SHOES!!! Feet encased in purple suede often appreciate a FEW FUCKING AIRHOLES HERE AND THERE, you FUCKING TWITS!" I mean, *how do you fuck up something as simple and as straightforward as a Chuck Fucking Taylor???* It's like those Ramones t-shirts they have these days, where none of the letters in the logo touch. IF YOU'RE MAKING "RAMONES" LETTERING, ALL THE FUCKING LETTERS ARE

SUPPOSED TO TOUCH EACH OTHER A LITTLE BIT EXCEPT FOR THE "N" AND THE "E!" DUH! LOOK AT ANY OF THE FIRST FIVE ALBUMS, FUCKHEADS!!! HOW FUCKING DIFFICULT IS THAT???

((this brings up the parallel question of how the RAMONES managed to fuck up something so simple as the Ramones as well—I've been listening to a lot of live bootlegs lately, and it is now abundantly clear that, by 1988 [[and possibly sooner]], the Ramones were so bad live as to be utterly unlistenable. But i listen anyway. Weird)) In any event, sagely realizing that the fifty-dollar Weapon EVO™s and forty-dollar Poorman's Weapons™ were not exactly doin' it for me, i decided, fuck my collapsed arches, i'm just gonna get a new pair of regular ol' Chucks and be done with it. I check out the Converse® website to see what colors they have these-a-days. They have "Ramones" Chuck Taylors® now, which look appropriately non-Ramoney ((the only sage conjecture i can take away from this is that Nike® were the reason the Ramones sucked live from 1988 on out)). They have Blondie Chucks as well, which is TOTALLY fucking moronic, because ANYONE who owns a copy of Blondie's "Parallel Lines" album KNOWS that a "Blondie" pair of Chucks would consist of ONE BLACK CHUCK AND ONEREDCHUCK, LIKE DRUMMER ((and two-gig Ramone)) CLEM BURKE IS WEARING ON THE BACK COVER OF THAT ALBUM, and ANY OTHER ATTEMPTS TO MARKET AN ALLEGED

"BLONDIE" CHUCK TAYLOR is fucking BULLSHIT, DUDE!!! Humpf! I find a pretty cool color—"Aster Purple"—that has apparently worn out its welcome on the shelves, because they're only twenty-five bucks postpaid. I have, thus far, dropped \$110 on shoes, and am winding up with a pair of Chucks to show for it. I go to select my size. I take a 10½ Chuck. Always have. However, Converse® doesn't OFFER half-sizes in Aster Purple Chucks, only whole sizes. Further, the website informs me that Chuck Taylors® are actually a HALF-SIZE LARGER than their sizing would indicate. So, if i take a 10½, that means i really take an 11. But if i order my shoes as a size 11, it means i'm really getting a size 11½, when we've already established i take a 10½. If i order a 10, it means i'm really getting a 10½, but we've also established that my 10½ is really an 11, which they don't offer. My choices are to order a size 10, which is really a 10½, or a size 11, which is really an 11½, when what i really want is a 10½, which is really an 11, which i can't have. I order the size 10's (housekeeper, now in a black leather cat mask, rolls eyes in exasperation, then turns to resume some manner of off-camera flogging duties)). As i return home, feet screaming in agony, i find my new shoes have arrived.

They are, of course, too small.

Regards,  
—Norb





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• ART •

IT'S THE TIME I DREAD THE  
MOST...WHEN HE COMES...



I TRY TO IGNORE  
HIM...



BUT HE ONLY  
GETS BIGGER!



SO I HAVE TO BRING HIM  
DOWN TO SIZE...

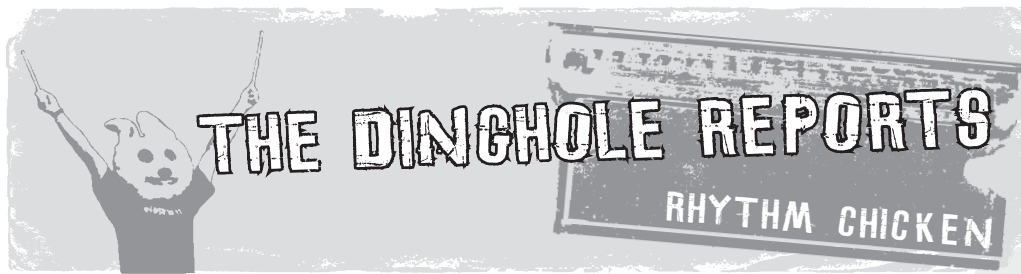


...AND WHEN I FINALLY GET  
CONTROL OVER HIM...

...I'M  
ALWAYS  
AMAZED  
THAT I CAN  
FIGURE  
OUT HOW  
TO TAME  
HIM.







## “MY SOCK MONKEY!”

# Handicapped Ruckus!

The Dinghole Reports  
By The Rhythm Chicken  
(Commentary by Francis Funyuns)  
[Edited by Dr. Sicnarf]

As I sit typing this, sweat drips down my arms and I can see a sea of green foliage straight out of my “office” window. Humidity, hmm. I must be back in Wisconsin. Yes, my latest winter of living in the dry, dry desert has again come to an end. I am indeed back in Wisconsin, back in Door County, back in my continually collapsing trailer in the northwoods. I’m afraid that my last six months living in a condo in Boulder City have pampered me, somewhat. Suddenly, my rapidly deteriorating pile of junk trailer home appears to me as a....RAPIDLY DETERIORATING PILE OF JUNK TRAILER HOME! I pull myself together, close my eyes, and picture my home as the righteous castle it was ten years ago. That’s right; I live in a righteous castle, like any other superhero.

(So you’ve returned to Door County yet again. I’m sensing a trend here, Mr. Chicken. You move to Milwaukee, then to Door County. You move to Poland, then to Milwaukee, then to Door County. You move back to Milwaukee, then to Poland, and then back to Door County. Then you throw us all for a loop and move to frickin’ *Las Vegas*, and then, of course, back to Door County. After one more winter in the Las Vegas area, you again move... back to Door County. Okay, seriously, Chicken... who or what are you running from? –F.F.)

I like to think of it more as “chasing the excitement.” I’ve heard others refer to it as “wanderlust.” I prefer to label it “RUCKUSLUST”!

[Well, Rhythm Chicken, this claim certainly brings to mind the question, “Has there been any ruckus?” –Dr. S.]

Yes! YES! Oh, most definitely YES! There has indeed been ruckus! After a six month medical hiatus, there was indeed a triumphant return to the “stage,” as it were. But first I must address a few concerns. What on earth is living in the attic of my woodshed?! The

roof of my beloved woodshed (the original chicken coop, my home for a few years) has been violated! I returned to find, not one, but two large holes frantically dug through my woodshed’s tile roof! Horrendous teeth and claw marks are sure signs of the viciousness of the beast! Possum? Raccoon? The Man-Eating Great Wisconsin Sloth?

(Uh, excuse me, Rhythm Whiner, but does this really concern us? –F.F.)

\*sigh\* Okay, maybe I should move on to my next topic. Some of you may remember from my ramblings of the past my complete and utter disdain for that other fanged beast, Gary Coleman. Two lone natural enemies of the Rhythm Chicken have always been Gary Coleman and that hideous Big Bird. Now I wake up to find that one half of my natural enemy population is dead. I’m not sure exactly how to feel about Gary’s death, since that same day I also learned of the passing of Dennis Hopper. This is truly sad. I will have to watch my copies of *Human Highway* and *River’s Edge* again for good measure. I’m preparing myself of the onslaught of Frank Booth quotes sure to come.

[Yeah, yeah, Chicken. Let’s get to the ruckus already. Have you had any interaction with the punk rock world, *at all*? –Dr. S.]

Well, in all actuality, I poked my head out of Boulder City on the weekend of Punk Rock Bowling. I stayed far away from Sunset Station (official site for this year’s punk rock circus), just as I tend to stay far away from “the strip.” I’ve become somewhat allergic to large crowds of any kind lately. Instead, I opted to poke my head into the Bunkhouse Saloon in downtown Vegas. I was fortunate enough to see the Maxi-Pads and Vena Cava before sneaking out and returning to my Boulder City bed. My current back problems will only allow me to *ease* back into the punk rock.

(Old Man Chicken! Can’t handle the punk rock? CAN’T HANDLE THE RUCKUS? –F.F.)

[Yeah, Rhythm Staller. Where exactly is this ruckus you previously clucked about? –Dr. S.]

### Dinghole Report #114: Monkey Business Ruckus! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #460)

Las Vegas, the entertainment capital of the world. That’s what they call it. What a strange scene Las Vegas has. The casinos essentially run the town, sort of. The Double Down Saloon does a fine job of offering up bands almost every night, and every night’s show is free of charge. It don’t get punker than that! A few other bars offer punk shows on a much less frequent basis. Then there are the big venues, run by various casinos: House of Blues, The Joint, etc... You might catch Bad Religion or the Offspring at such places, but you probably won’t see me there. As you may or may not know, the Rhythm Chicken is constantly searching for the venue more unexpected.

You may remember last year, my final gig in the Las Vegas area was at the middle school where my Main Hen teaches. She was in charge of the talent show and asked if the Rhythm Chicken would join the entertainment cavalcade. I found it strange and bizarre for a man in his upper-thirties to be playing at a middle school talent show. This is exactly why I dove at the chance! Amongst sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, in front of their families and other sixth, seventh, and eighth graders at Roy Martin Middle School, I unleashed my ruckus. Why wouldn’t I?

This year, my Hen was again in charge of the show. My ruckus went over very well last year (against all odds), and she requested I do a repeat performance. All winter my back had been okay some days, and not so okay other days. The thought of doing my usual all-out flail like a fish out of water routine didn’t quite seem like the best idea. I had to do something different. With my back problems, I had to somehow take the attention away from my even lower level of talent. I had to bring in a ringer who I knew would win over the crowd. I had to be a sly, sly chicken.

The drums were set up out in front of the crowd, left over from a previous band of seventh graders. I walked up to the set with two prop signs in one hand and my secret weapon in the other. A confused murmur swept through the crowd. I held up my first sign which said SILENCE. They, again, grew miraculously silent for a crowd of



NICOLE TWARDZIK

**That's right!  
I live in a  
righteous castle,  
like any other  
superhero.**

middle schoolers. Then I held up the sign that read SCREAM, which, as you can imagine, a gym full of middle schoolers had no problem doing. I shook the sign so they would really scream, and they did! There I was, about to dish out the ruckus to a gym full of children and parents. It was time.

I held up what was in my other hand. The crowd's screams were deafening! I knew they couldn't deny a creature so adorable and precious as MY SOCK MONKEY! Yes! Nuzzles, my sock monkey, was a smash hit! They hollered out their adoration for Nuzzles. He was a star! Attention had been diverted! I set Nuzzles on the rack holding up the two tom-toms. He took to the makeshift monkey bars quite well. I started my opening drum roll and the audience remained fixed on Nuzzles, the world's coolest sock monkey!

Then, I unleashed my handicapped ruckus! I was not too loud! I was not too crazy! I played some meager beats and did so in quite a tame manner! I did not throw my torso around! I did not thrash my chickenhead around too wildly! I did not explode in a hurricane of untamed ruckus! I did, however, deliver a passable gig of mild drumming and managed to throw my wings up the air for my most majestic pose (MY MOVE! MY SIGNATURE MOVE!). The crowd continued their screams and cheers! I know they were cheering for Nuzzles, because there was nothing in my gig worth cheering for in the slightest! I held up Nuzzles one last time to his mass of followers! They loved it.

I walked off the stage like a human, not hopping, just walking. I had actually delivered a tame and unrowdy gig. I remained within the realm of decency. I was of no threat whatsoever. Lucky for me, I had my trusty sock monkey Nuzzles there to save the show! This time I was lucky.

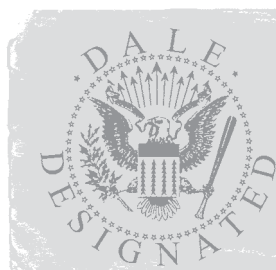
[And did you make it into the *Boulder City Review* Police Blotter? –Dr. S.]

\*sigh\* I bow my head in defeat. Despite the attempts by my Main Hen and me, we did not make it into the Police Blotter. Even after repeatedly dressing up the statue of old Mayor Broadbent in all types of crazy costumes while walking home from the brewpub, we still couldn't catch the attention of the Police Blotter. Another failure on my part.

Extra special thanks to Marge and Tony Taylor (Boulder City's greatest couple!) for all they did to make our BC winter a great one! Cheers!

–Rhythm Chicken  
rhythmchicken@hotmail.com





# I'M AGAINST IT

DESIGNATED DALE

**“Grunt,  
squeeze,  
plop, wipe,  
and flush.”**

## Collections, Crazies, and Ramonage

Collecting has captured the attention of millions of all ages throughout the years, and the noted notables that people have amassed under their belts can be enough to choke a dinosaur. Nevertheless, we creatures known as human beings, who dig what we dig and love what we love, will continue on with the collecting of what makes us tick, no matter how large or small the sum total of our scavenging takes us down the road in our lifetimes. If you stop and think about it, this kind of behavior starts early on in life (for most, anyway). Here are a few examples:

There were the kids of yesteryear, wearing those old-timey knit cab driver hats atop their little pinheads that hoarded and traded marbles with the other little pee-wees of the neighborhood (Think *Our Gang/The Little Rascals*). These tykes played for keeps amidst the chalk-drawn circles on the schoolyard asphalt, where it was determined who would walk away with whose marbles at the end of a heated round or two of flicking’n’clicking. Funny thing is, I do remember monkeying around with marbles as a kid growing up in the ‘70s, but for other more “inventive” uses, like that of deadly ammo through the use of a wrist rocket (Google that shit if you’ve never experienced the destructive joy of a wrist rocket. You can still purchase them today). For some unexplained reason or another, I distinctly remember making pyramids out of glued-together marbles around this time in elementary school, only to dismantle it later on at home for better uses other than its intended paperweight design... hello, school-funded ammo. I also vividly remember swallowing a black marble from some pink, translucent plastic maze game way early on when I first started elementary school, wondering if it would be as smooth coming out as it was going down my gullet. Don’t ask me why I was thinking of something like that at the time. As clever as most people like to assume they are, most little kids are nothing more than flailing, giggling idiots.

There were also the lil’ snot-nosed heathens who would get together with their other baseball card-carrying compatriots to boast and possibly trade some of the jewel specimens from their latest Topps haul stashed in their back pockets. Although it’d make the most rabid baseball card junkie cringe, I find it ironically funny to think that the kids from the 1950s (think of all them New York Yankee stars at the time) who got burned out on the whole baseball card racket and often ended up with their cards

taped within fraying distance of their bicycle spokes—*clackety-clackety-clack!* (Sorry, Gary, it sucks, but it’s funny.)

Not one to get into baseball until later on in my adult life (again, thanks to Gary), my era of single-digit youth concerning trading cards primarily revolved around KISS bubblegum cards and *Wacky Packages* stickers, that awful gum the consistency of sawdust be damned. While a good chunk of the older kids in my neighborhood were building up an impressive stash of baseball cards (my older brother Joe and pal Gary included, who are probably sitting on some serious goods these days), I was an eight-year-old on a feverish mission to fill in the voids of that first series of KISS cards (#1-66) back in 1978. Cruising up to the neighborhood liquor store on my candy apple red, glitter-flaked Schwinn Stingray and plunking down as much as I could for those 15-cent packs, I’d tear into the wax paper wrappers and sift through the thin stacks of cards, cursing the box the packs came from if I happened upon the inevitable doubles of cards I already had. It made that same shitty pack instantly one hundred percent sweeter if I plucked out a card that I’d been waiting to get my crusty little hands on, getting *that* much closer to closing in on that small handful of slippery numbers from one to sixty-six.

The same went with the *Wacky Packages* stickers hunt the following year in 1979. If you haven’t checked out the artwork from these wonderful satirized product masterpieces, poke around online for some extensive *Wacky Packages* sites, especially the different series of sets from the late ‘60s through the ‘70s—some really fantastic paintings went into the production of these cult classics of pop culture (some of which have fetched a very, very shiny dime at auction, in fact).

I was a complete and utter KISS freak as a kid, but it was around this precise time in 1979 that their material started going down the tubes, with the release of *Dynasty*. If you were old enough, you might remember that wretched song, “I Was Made for Lovin’ You,” to which all the second wave smarmy disco creeps and roller rinks were suddenly getting hot on KISS to. Yeah, *that* turd of the turntable, *Dynasty*: grunt, squeeze, plop, wipe, and flush.

It was then that I ripped off my youthful KISS blinds that had failed me with their recent fecal offering and I started to pay closer attention to what Joe and Julie (my

older brother and sister), the teen contingent on our block, as well as my friends’ older siblings were listening to. Through the rest of grade school and mid-high school, I really got into a lot of classic hard rock, which was named the New Wave of British Heavy Metal in the early ‘80s.

Not that heavily exposed to punk until my years in high school, the new genre that was labeled “thrash” struck a deep chord with me, especially with outfits like Slayer and Metallica. (Even though—after their fourth LP and on—Metallica’s output is like that of a limp dick on the set of an adult movie, their early records still strongly hold their own). As soon as I learned the word of the gospel according to Ramones by way of my sister and a few pals in high school, my inner collector was vigorously shaken and slapped awake, all the way back to that kid who was hooting and hollering about KISS cards in front of that liquor store in 1978.

The only difference is that a band like the Ramones still has some of the most potent staying power, solely based on their recorded material and mind-crushing live experiences, even if KISS was (and sadly continues to be) one heck of an unslayable merch dragon, now living on the name of its past.

It started out with the simple process of getting the Ramones’ discography tracked down and purchased on vinyl, which I did very quickly. It was like scratching the most annoying itch every time I added another one of their LPs to the pile, blasting out longer and longer sets of Ramones slabs as the record stack grew fatter. I then started hitting record swap meets and pouring through an excellent music trader paper called *Goldmine*, finding that there was much more Ramones vinyl goodness to be had in the form of bootlegged live shows, rare demos, and the staple of any self-respecting punk rock box of rekkids, the 7-inch.

Remember, this was all pre-eBay, when one had the unfortunate joy of having to deal with multiple Comic Book Guy types (think *The Simpsons*) and have painful discussions about some record or related item’s worth. I was fortunate enough to get a hefty variety of Ramones vinyl going, and I was on my way. I began trading and buying VHS copies of gigs, and soon thereafter getting serious into collecting promotional swag and the like, especially from the ‘70s era of the band. I think it’s extremely important here to point out that there’s a most definite line that divides heavy duty fans and those obsessive/compulsive types that let any

band (or hobby, for that matter) run their fucking lives like a coked-up monkey on their backs. Don't get me wrong—I've accrued quite a chunk of Ramoneage (There's a new song title, Milo. You're welcome.) over the past twenty-plus years, but it's all been in the thrill of the find, not some overly desperate hunt for a fix. Just because you love something to death doesn't mean it has to be the death of you.

I've met people here and there over the years who collect everything, and I mean *every single fucking thing*, as far as acquiring the complete vinyl catalog for certain bands. You can't help but notice an uneasy glint in their eyes when they start pining about some ridiculously rare pressing from the Philippines or Czechoslovakia that they've yet to get their sweaty, quivering hands on. That's not enjoyment, man. That's called "being out of your tree." And for the record, yes, I do spin all my records, new *and* old. That's what they were originally intended for, right? For fuck's sake, if you were sitting on a grip of some of the most awesome art of our time, are you going to hang it on your wall for you and your homies to freak out on, or seal it all up like a bunch of dusty mummies and pack it all away in the dark recesses of storage where no one can even see it? Sharing the experience of what you hold dear to you is half of the overall enjoyment, in my opinion. Squirreling it all away just doesn't make any sense to me at all, mang.

The old adage goes, "You can't take it with you," and this is true for anyone whether it's the old, gray-bearded history buff who has the biggest, most expensive stamp collection in the world, or the eccentric kook who has dozens and dozens of shadow boxes filled with the most exotic butterfly specimens known to man. My being a Ramones fan may not rank up there with these two examples to most. However, I want to pass on what I have to all the wide-eyed, future Ramones fans down the road, like so many other older fans have kindly done for me in the past and without price-gouging me, for that matter!

Yeah, you can't take it with you, but if you're lucky, you can leave behind some pertinent collectable jibs that go hand-in-hand with your shared knowledge for those who are ready to go off the deep end for that particular band, just like you did.

And that's one of the things that has made punk rock, as well as life in general, so great: shared knowledge.

I'm Against It,  
—Fuck You, Dale  
designateddale@yahoo.com



CRAIG HORKY

I vividly remember swallowing a black marble from some pink, translucent plastic maze game way early on when I first started elementary school.



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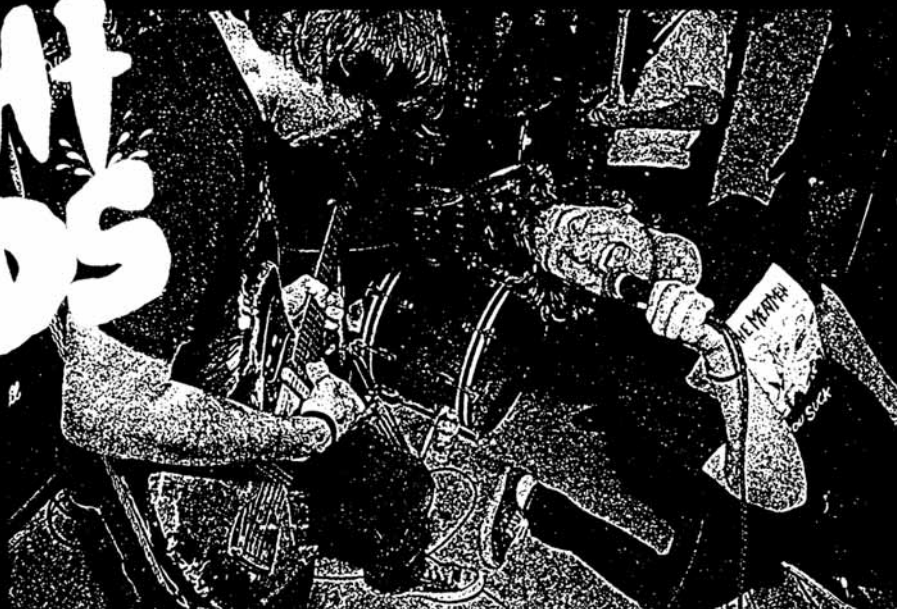


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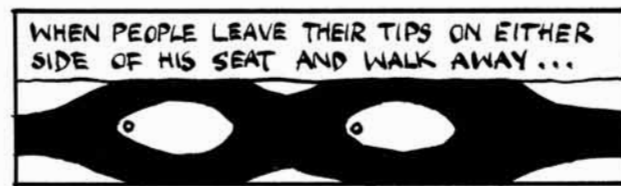
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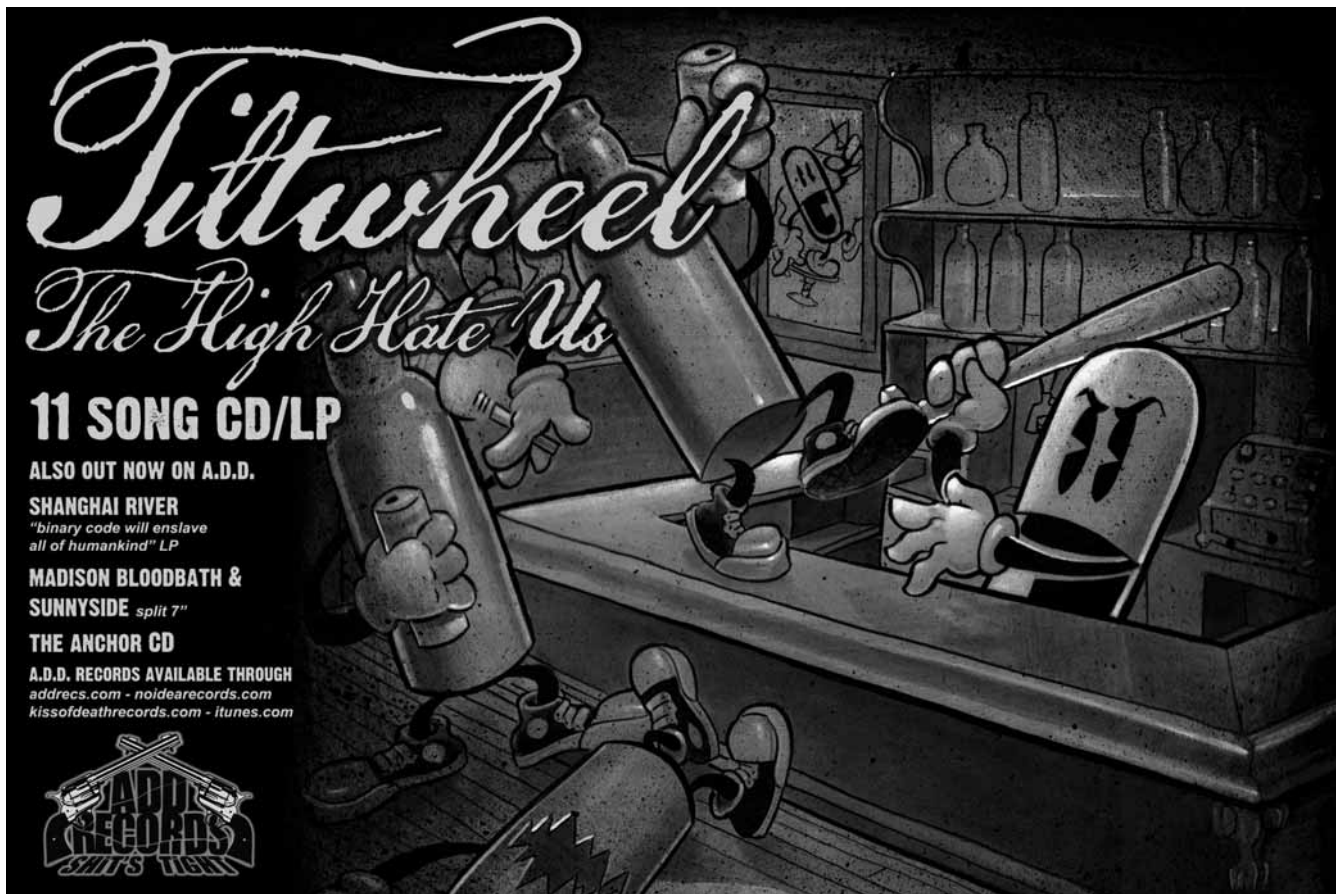


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## SQUEEZE MY HORN GARY HORNBERGER

**"Like watching  
a train wreck in  
slow motion as  
each car hurls off  
the tracks."**

# Vote Gary. Vote Hornberger.

When I have jury duty, it always amazes me how my eyes are opened to topics that baffle me. I always felt juries were weeded out by the defense and prosecutors to get down to a group of individuals who were easily manipulated and wouldn't hold their ground. Luckily, my first couple of times in jury selection, I worked the prosecutor into giving me the boot. This particular time, however, I had no easy out. I thought I was going to get hooked for a couple of days. I was wrong completely and was on my way out almost as fast as I was seated in the jury box. This time through, I was less mortified by lawyers than I was by the system's inefficiency. It wasn't the process of weeding people out by the lawyers' silly questions, or the strange way they decide who stays and goes, but the waste of funds they use in these tough economic times.

If Person Q. Public comes back the second day; they get paid fifteen dollars plus mileage. We had twenty-eight jurors who were asked to come back the next day. This was strange since we left the jury pool room at 10:30 AM to go to the court room, and at 11:00 AM we were instructed about the case and told to come back the following day. "What is that?" you ask. "Why didn't we go through the weeding out process right then when we had at least six hours to do it?" The answer is "I don't know."

Twenty-eight of us returned the next day to play lotto, but at least everyone picked got some sort of payment. The lawyers started cutting us. Mind you, I'm number eighteen, so I felt good about my chances to leave. After the first cut, I got to number ten. Then I didn't feel so good, but after a girl behind me got dismissed, the prosecutor cut me loose. My ass didn't even have enough time to warm the seat. While I was back getting my paperwork processed, two more people came back from the same court room. I asked jokingly if anyone was left, and one of the ladies informed me that the judge said he was going to need to pull more people from the jury pool room to fill out the jury. So here's the math: twenty-eight people in and at least fifteen out. Those fifteen will get fifteen dollars plus some chump change mileage. That comes out to at least \$225, all of which could have been avoided if they would have cut us the first day.

Two-hundred twenty-five dollars at just one court room wasted when the state can't find enough money to pay teachers. That's just pure stupidity. What this state needs to

do is get an efficiency expert to curb this waste. Take bids for the job, get the cheapest company, and report the findings to the media so the people are informed as to why their children can't get a quality education. Hell, I'll take the job, because just in my little area of Artesia I can find multiple areas of wasted spending. There's a set of turn signals that have been under burlap sacks for two years at the major intersection by my house. That same intersection has had the turn lanes painted a couple of times because they can't figure things out correctly the first time. I should really find out who is on that planning committee and see if they're elected officials so that I can vote their dumb, wasteful asses out of office and put someone with half a brain (like me) in to get the job done right.

Another mistake I made recently was answering my phone and getting sucked into giving money to the police and fireman's organizations. Don't get me wrong; we need them, but I saw on a news report that they are the state organizations that are considered "golden cows," meaning they are necessary and really can't be touched by spending cuts, whereas teachers and others can. My only problem here is that the teachers never bother to disrupt my evenings to ask me for a donation. Maybe they need to get out in an intersection with a boot and panhandle motorists for change. Although, the firemen might run them off for infringing on their gig. Maybe that will be an experiment I can undertake. I'll take a bucket and a billboard—my billboard will be bright and fancy not sharpie on cardboard—out to a major intersection and see how much money I can drum up in a two- or three-hour period, go home, multiply that by how many teachers are in the state, and cry over the results.

Since I'm on the issue of planning and inefficiency, I would use the money I saved in other areas to address some of the piss-poor, planned freeway interchanges in this state. Once again, I would start with a problem close to home: the 91 west transition to the 605 north. Why did the planner think it was a good idea to run the north and south lanes parallel for so long so that every asshole going north can try to go down the south lane and merge at the last second, resulting in a barrage of break lights, causing accidents, and forcing cars to go over the side?

You'd think I'm running for office or something. The truth is that the government has achieved a point of making the simple complex. I don't build roads, but I can see there

needs to be a better way to move cars along. I'm not a financial wiz, but I can see where money is being wasted; so what I'm asking is that we evaluate a situation, spin it around, shake it, and figure out the best solution. If it bugs you, let others know about it.

### EXCESSIVE FORCE

£10, Various Contributors

This one is touted as "a comics anthology against the police." It is very interesting that a book could be arranged with so many negative views of the organizations that are designed to protect us. The viewpoints consist of writers around the globe. Yet, eerily, they all ring with distaste from the abuse of power. This book leaves the reader asking "What do we do?" because this collection is not only viewed from sarcastic viewpoints, it is also backed with history and, in some examples, facts. Reading this book makes the day a little darker for it is a cold slap of reality that the police, in some instances, are a necessary evil. I can almost bet the next compilation will consist of the history of power of abuse of governing bodies. *Excessive Force* is a necessary but difficult book to take in and consume. Proceeds from the sale of the book go to two organizations trying to monitor the abuses of police power. I would recommend a very open mind when reading this book. (Last Hours / Creative Resistance, [lasthours.org.uk](http://lasthours.org.uk))

### I'D SURE LIKE SOME FUCKING PANCAKES

\$2.00 US, By Lauren Barnett

I tend to be scared of a book that begs me to read it. Right from the get-go, that's what this one does. The title led me to believe this was going to tickle a rib, but it falls short for my laughing gene. This one is full of kitties and unicorns and dancing pigs that cross the pages in a head-spinning fashion. Some of this is explained. These images were sent to the author in dreams. Other images were thought up and jotted down from memory when the author was much younger. I thought the killing of a unicorn in a dream was some indication of bad things to happen in life. Luckily, that was at the end because I was ready to give up there. Being short was the best thing about this one. ([laurenmbarnett@gmail.com](mailto:laurenmbarnett@gmail.com), [melikesyou.blogspot.com](http://melikesyou.blogspot.com))

### FEEDBACK VIDEOTONFA

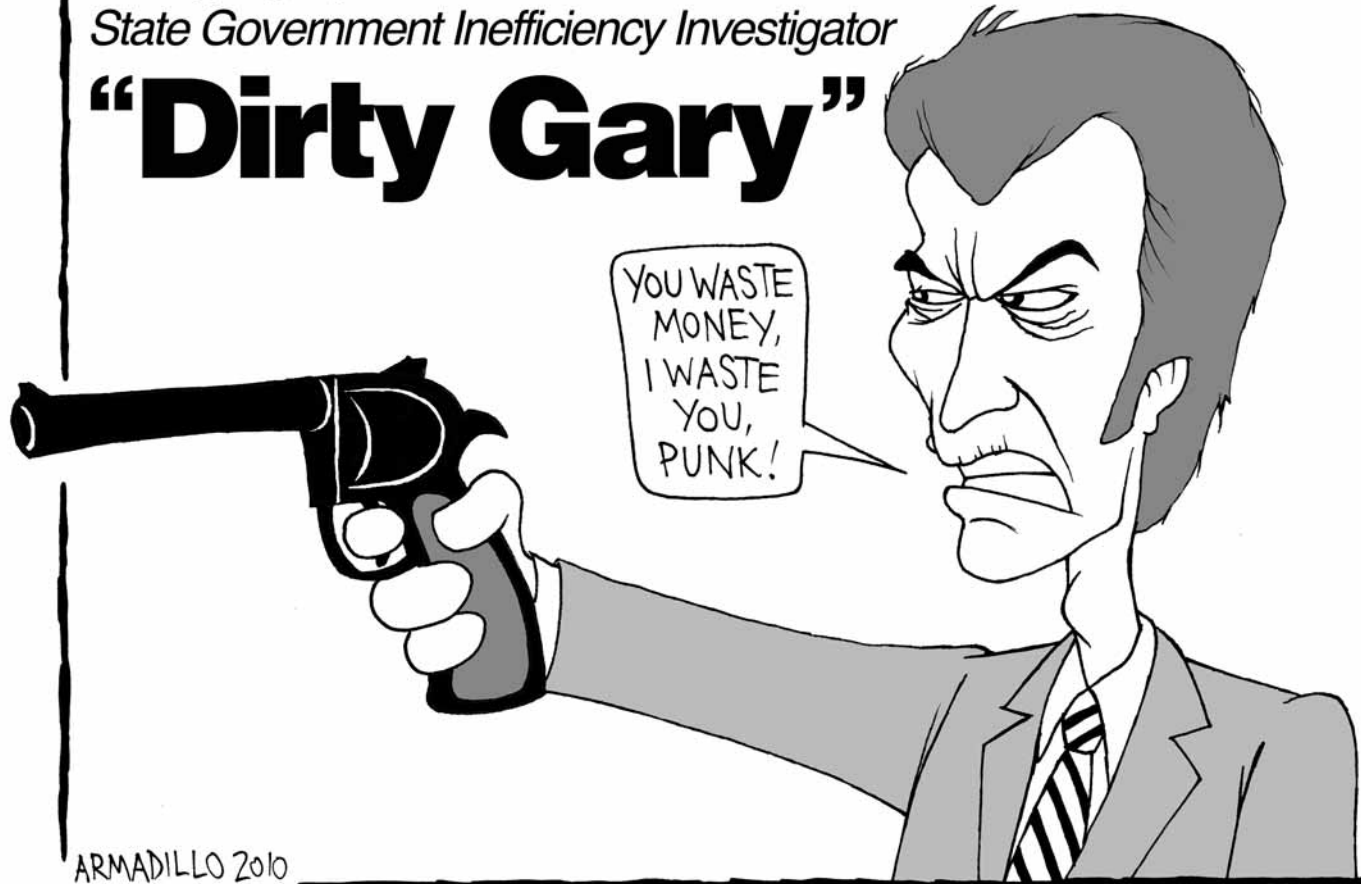
\$ ?, By John Isaacson

This is a cool little rag that, from my best interpretation, is a bunch of reviews of

Setting a gritty new standard for elected officials...

State Government Inefficiency Investigator

# "Dirty Gary"



JASON ARMADILLO

**Evaluate a Situation, Spin it  
around, Shake it, and figure out  
the best solution.**

shows and movies. At the start, it seems to be a collection of shows that are reviewed with a flyer on one page and a comic strip interpretation of the going-ons of the show in the following panels. Pretty fucking original! Then, towards the back half, the reviews are of movies, most of which are really crappy. However, reviews of movies like *Critters* and *Buckaroo Banzai* are rather comical any way you write them. I dub this section "The Regular Guys Guide to Sunday Afternoon Television." I really enjoyed the read. (John Isaacson, 3613 SE 10<sup>th</sup> Ave., Portland, OR 97202, unlay.com, lastgasp.com, microcosmpublishing.com)

## **SUPERTALK #2**

\$ 4.88 on a Y-mart sticker?,  
By Various Contributors

This is a collection of the most "you can't leave me hanging here" stories I have ever had the pleasure of reading. Just about every one of these had me hooked and reeled to the boat; then the line snapped. I realize that they may say "The End," but I felt that the

story was incomplete and needed to give me some more closure. For example, why did the guy tear through the couple's house and leave a huge, coiled shit on their couch? I need to know, dammit! If you want to read some fantastic fantasy that leaves you in shock, then this is a must-find. The only problem with this book is it has no contact information. I shook the comic and I shook the envelop it came in. Nothing.

## **WAS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE FUNNY**

\$5.50 US, By Lauren Barnett

This comic is much better than *I'd Sure Like Some Fucking Pancakes*. The unicorns are absent, the stories are easier to relate to, and the stories out of the diary are realistic. It goes back and forth in age, rather than following a forward-moving chronological order. As for the apartment scam, you really feel a push to go out and find that landlord and kick his ass. I really like the Milk Duds theory though I'm hesitant to try it out as some stores, like The Dollar Tree, have a

distasteful smell. This one is a good little book and—if the progression continues—this will be a great little read. (melikesyou.blogspot.com, laurenmbarnett@gmail.com)

## **LOSERS WEEPERS**

\$5.00 US, By J.T. Yost

When this calls itself a tragi-comic, it's not kidding. I've heard of people having a bad day but this comic takes the cake. It would be wise of us to cautiously stand clear of the single mother who just received bad reports of her kids at school. This is like watching a train wreck in slow motion as each car hurls off the tracks. The artwork is very clean and the use of written notes and letters works well with the story. One can't read this without wanting the rain to stop, but keeps reading along as the shower turns to a storm. This is a read that will make you feel much better about the crappy day you're having. (birdcagebottombooks.com, jtyost.com, jtyost@gmail.com)

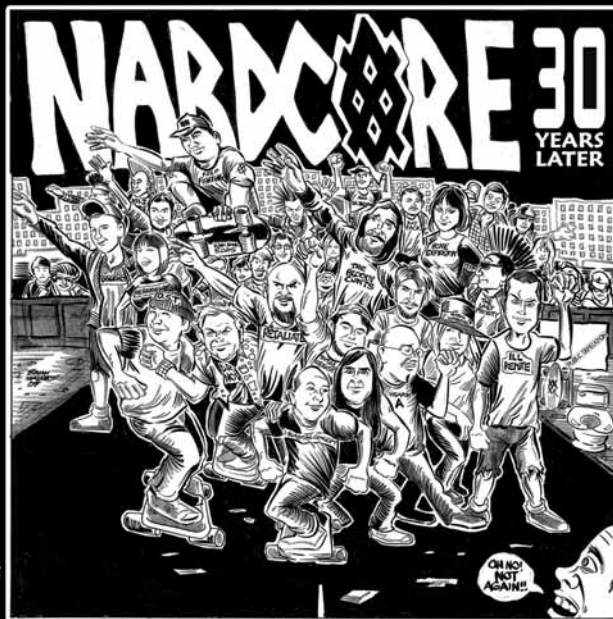
—Gary Hornberger



DR.KNOW  
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 THE KILZ AHH DA BEEYAS  
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 RAT PACK BONE EXPLOSION  
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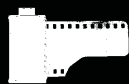
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**“He talked to me, rapped to me, talked shit about everybody who was with me.”**

# Nardwuar vs. Snoop Doggy Dog

## The Human Serviette

**Nardwuar:** Who are you?

**Snoop:** Snoop D-O-double G.

**Nardwuar:** Snoop, welcome to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

**Snoop:** Thank you for having me, Nardwuar. It's a pleasure and a treat to be here again with you.

**Nardwuar:** Snoop Doggy Dogg, it's amazing. I've been interviewing you for ten years now. Do you remember the first time I talked to you on the set of the movie *Bones* in 2000? Ten years!

**Snoop:** I do remember that. This is where I shot *Bones*, out in Vancouver.

**Nardwuar:** And here we are ten years later, at a hotel.

**Snoop:** In Vancouver, B.C.

**Nardwuar:** In Vancouver, B.C., Canada. And people really have enjoyed our interviews over the years. Do you know that Snoop?

**Snoop:** Yeah, because they been rather different; you know what I'm saying? Because most guys who interview me don't have as much personality as you have, as much courageousness. You know, you're courageous and you got a lot of personality, so it brings the best out of me and you at the same time.

**Nardwuar:** Well, thank you for the kind words Snoop Dogg and I wanna say our interviews have inspired people. Check out what this cartoonist Mitch Clem drew. This drawing of me, and look who's in the corner! [Nardwuar pulls out a Mitch Clem drawing]

**Snoop:** Oh no, big Snoop Dogg. I like that. He got James Brown in the bottom, too.

**Nardwuar:** And Tommy Chong!

**Snoop:** Wow, what a combination.

**Nardwuar:** And Nardwuar The Human Serviette, right in the middle.

**Snoop:** And you bigger than everybody else.

**Nardwuar:** Well, speaking of bigger... turn this drawing over and look what else Mitch Clem drew.

**Snoop:** [reading] Nardwuar the Canuck.

**Nardwuar:** Nardwuar the Canuck.

**Snoop:** So you're a Vancouver Canuck?

**Nardwuar:** I am Nardwuar the Canuck from Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada and I was wondering Snoop, when is the interview going to happen at your house? I've been trying to set this up for three years, because you kindly said the last time I talked to you, I could interview you at your house.

**Snoop:** You are more than welcome to come to my house. You just gotta get a ticket and come see me, get 'em up on here. My partner will let you know how to get through the door. Once you get through the door, you get past the dogs, and you get to me.

**Nardwuar:** I have been trying to set it up for three years. I haven't had too much luck.

**Snoop:** Well, I'm gonna make that happen for you, OG, 'cause you know I got love for you and that jacket you wearin' right now. [laughs]

**Nardwuar:** Snoop Dogg, speaking of wearing stuff and jerseys, I saw that you were wearing a Maple Leafs hockey jersey in 1993 on Arsenio Hall.

**Snoop:** Yeah, 'cause the Maple Leafs remind me of a chronic leaf and I was representing that; you know what I'm saying? I didn't know the Canada flag was so close to the chronic leaf. I just liked the way it looked so I was representin' and it was blue.

**Nardwuar:** Snoop Dogg, you have a song called "Serial..."

**Snoop:** ...Killer."

**Nardwuar:** "Serial Killer." In the song, you mention Watts in it. What can you tell the people about The Watts Prophets and their record? [Nardwuar hands Snoop an LP.]

**Snoop:** Oh you got The Watts Prophets album! This is heavy. This record right here was a lot of talk and they did a lot of talkin'—with the way they talked over the music and the things that they said and just...

**Nardwuar:** In 1971, too. Like, "Rappin' Black in a White World."

**Snoop:** Yeah, they was going hard. I remember the song "Hello Niggers." That was a hell of a song on there; you know what I'm saying? They just had a hell of a bass sound to it. The piano, it symbolized what we were going through in America as African-Americans at the time and this was a very, very strong record. I'm glad that you brought this Nard, 'cause this is a piece of history that people need to know about.

**Nardwuar:** And DJ Quik has sampled it, too. Have you ever thought about sampling it or anything like that?

**Snoop:** I don't have the record. Maybe if I had the record, I could sample it.

**Nardwuar:** That's for you, Snoop Doggy Dogg.

**Snoop:** Well, I appreciate it. Now I can sample it.

**Nardwuar:** Snoop Doggy Dog of all the roasts you've been to, do you think Lisa Lampanelli is the funniest? She's hilarious, isn't she?

**Snoop:** She is funny. I like Lisa Lampanelli. She's got a big mouth and a big cunt.

**Nardwuar:** Speaking of dirty things, Snoop Doggy Dogg—Blowfly. You finally met him. Years ago, here in this very hotel in 2002, I showed you my Blowfly record, which you took.

**Snoop:** I had to take it, 'cause I mean, Blowfly, Clarence Reid is a favorite of mine. He's been in my household since I was a kid. So I finally fuckin' met him via you, puttin' me back in the world of lovin' Blowfly again. I met Tom, Uncle Tom, his drummer. He came to my show and he hung out with me for about four or five hours and we just had a great time. He talked to me, rapped to me, talked shit about everybody who was with me. I mean, he was just the guy who I thought he was.

**Nardwuar:** Snoop Doggy Dogg, what can you tell the people about this VHS cassette right here? I was curious, did you put this out?

**Snoop:** Oh my, Kev [looks at his manager]. This is what the fuck I've been trying to find. My *Smoke Fest Vol. 1*. This is the first one I ever put out 'cause...

**Kev** (Snoop's manager): Where did you find it?

**Snoop:** Look, this is the first one that I put out. This is the first movie that I directed, put up the money for, shot it. See what it say on the back—"writer, director, and executive producer Snoop Doggy Dogg."

**Nardwuar:** And you don't have a copy yourself?

**Snoop:** No, I don't. I did this with Donald Randall, who was Dolemite's—Rudy Ray Moore's—manager, at the time when he was alive.

**Nardwuar:** Now, check out where I got this, right there. [Nard points to the price tag on the wrapping.] You took the wrapping away. This is quite amazing. Look at where it started. It started here at...

**Snoop:** Fifty cents.

**Nardwuar:** No, it started...

**Snoop:** Tower Records for \$14.95.



BILL PINKEL

**Snoop:** You're courageous and you got a lot of personality, so it brings the best out of me and you at the same time.

**Nardwuar:** And it ended up at?

**Snoop:** Fifty cent at Lely's Books...

**Nardwuar:** In Kingsgate Mall, in Vancouver. It went to fifty. I think it was interesting. Fifty cents for your actual VHS.

**Snoop:** That's dope.

**Nardwuar:** So would you like this, too, Snoop Doggy Dogg?

**Snoop:** I would gladly give you a dollar for it.

**Nardwuar:** Wow, okay, we'll do that then.

**Snoop:** Compensated for your time and your troubles. I been looking for this shit, homie, on some real shit. I really been trying to find this. This is my first one. I found *Vol. 2*. They got *Vol. 2*. You can get that anywhere. This shit right here is rare. This is the one where I directed it, I shot it, I got in some trouble behind this shit, too. There's some shit on there that was raw and uncut. [laughs]

**Nardwuar:** And now it's back in your hands for nobody to see ever again, right Snoop?

**Snoop:** Nard Ward!

**Nardwuar:** So Snoop, here you are in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, but Canada now owns Death Row, did you hear that? Some Canadians now own Death Row Records?

**Snoop:** I heard that. I really heard that.

**Nardwuar:** Some weird things happened at Death Row. Like there was a Death Row

auction. I think they sold one of your gold records. They sold Suge Knight's underwear. That was some really weird stuff.

**Snoop:** Underwear? What the hell they do that for?

**Nardwuar:** They sold Suge Knight's underwear.

**Snoop:** That's nice. How much did they get?

**Nardwuar:** I think it was \$5, or, maybe...

**Snoop:** That's awfully high.

**Nardwuar:** Snoop, do you know the band The Gourds at all? They have a song called "Gin and Juice."

**Snoop:** I know The Gourds. They redid my shit. They on some country shit now. They harder than a motherfucker. I fucks with them. I like them. They redid my shit on the country, but with a twist on it.

**Nardwuar:** Well, anything else you want to add to the people out there, Snoop Doggy Dogg?

**Snoop:** I just wanna say to all the peoples in Vancouver, B.C., I love and appreciate you all supporting me for so long, which has always been a place of relaxation for myself and a comfort zone when I wanna get away and just want to be to myself and enjoy some good B.C. bud. Vancouver's always the place to be.

**Nardwuar:** And also I was happy to help you out and get that VHS for you. My friend Leora actually found the *Smoke Fest* VHS.

**Snoop:** Hey Leora, good looking out. Youse a bad motherfucker for that. I been really trying to find it. I actually went on eBay and tried to buy this shit from a motherfucker who was gonna sell it to me for like \$40 dollars. I'm glad I bought it for a dollar. Leora, youse a real motherfucker.

**Nardwuar:** And also The Watts Prophets, too. I'm glad you'll enjoy that.

**Snoop:** Now that's heavy. That's gonna be on my next album. You gonna hear some of that. I'm gonna have to give you a shout-out on my next album, so look on the credits on the back for a double shout-out to my nephew from Vancouver, you know what I'm saying, "The Canuck, Mister Nard, Stay Hard, Wuar."

**Nardwuar:** Well thanks my Snoop. Keep on rockin' in the free world and doot doola doot doo...

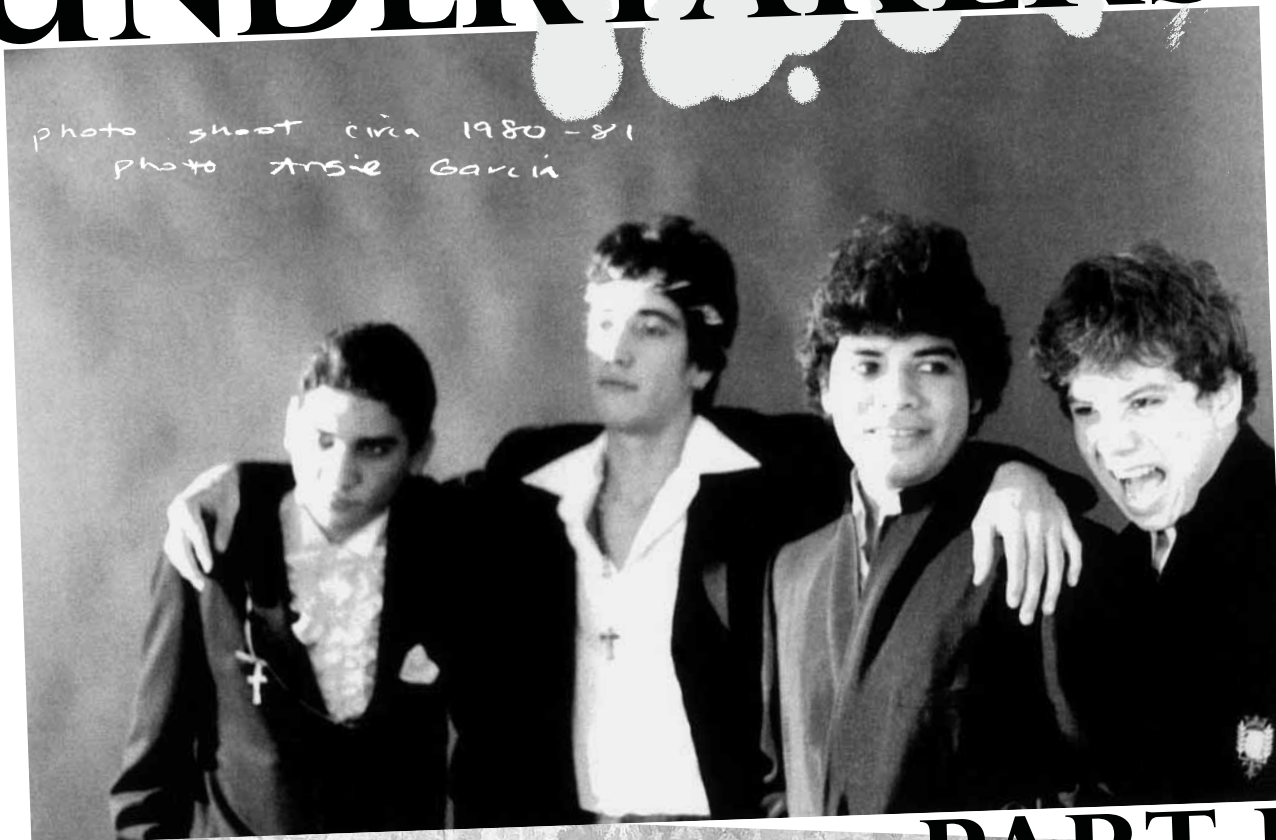
**Snoop:** Doot doo. Rock out with your cock out.

To hear and see this interview (and five other Nard Snoop interviews!) hop to:  
[www.nardwuar.com](http://www.nardwuar.com)



# THEE UNDERTAKERS

photo shoot circa 1980-81  
photo Angie Garcia



## PART II



Tracy Skul, Art TDNY, George  
circa 2005-2006  
photo by Angie Garcia

Interview by Jimmy Alvarado  
Handwriting by Angie Garcia

Layout by Daryl Gussin  
All uncredited photos courtesy of Thee Undertakers

Attitude. It's one of the most integral ingredients to good punk rock, and too often the one overlooked. With it, the most inept band can create a timeless anthem of defiance; without it, all those years of classes at the Musicians Institute won't save you from sounding like a bunch of half-assed poseurs.

One listen to Thee Undertakers and you can tell right off they know a thing or two about attitude, and they use their impressive musical prowess to enhance, rather than detract from, that attitude. Their songs are simultaneously smart, outspoken, funny, and *mean*. They aren't squeamish about going off in a completely different musical direction

or letting guitarist Tony "Fingers" Naranjo work his fretboard. They remain one of East L.A.'s premier punk acts. More than thirty years after they formed, they can still handily blow most any band that comes up against 'em off the stage. Attitude? These cats are saturated with it.

Part one of our two-part interview focused on the beginnings of the band, the East L.A. scene, how the two intersected with Los Angeles's greater punk scene and the recording of their sole album, one that took twenty years to be released. In part two, Tony, Art, and Tracy speak more of the past, as well as the future, beginning with the scene surrounding legendary East L.A. punk club, the Vex.

## VEXATION

**Jimmy:** You touched on it a little earlier, but what was the reaction in the neighborhoods—the community reaction—to you guys, as punks and as a band?

**Art:** I think it was hardly nothing, because those who went to those shows were already in the scene. They knew about us and knew where to go. They were just crowds, but when The Vex came out and when the Hollywood bands came out, there was a lot of people all the time.

**Tracy:** The Vex helped break a lot of things. All of these people came out of nowhere. We'd been playing small places in Whittier and Montebello.

**Art:** Yeah, we played a lot.

**Tracy:** All over the place. We played the Pico Sports Arena. We thought we were gods: "Oh, we're stadium rock now!"

**Tony:** Actually, The Vex came out at the right time because we hadn't really played too many places. I think we played the Hong Kong Cafe.

**Art:** The fuckin' Hong Kong Cafe was more our backyard than The Vex to me. We played more shows at the Hong Kong Cafe. We were loved there.

**Tracy:** That was another spot that was helping a lot, and Madame Wong's, too. We did the Starwood before it closed, which was great, but there was really nobody there because people weren't going to the club anymore because they were gonna close it.

**Tony:** We played a place called the Bla Bla Cafe, and then not too long after that, that's when they came out with The Vex. It came out at the right time for us.

**Jimmy:** How did you guys get involved with The Vex?

**Art:** It was through Joe Suquette (aka "Joe Vex").

**Tracy:** Joe Vex started the whole thing.

**Tony:** Willie (Herron, of Los Illegals) had the name, but Joe Vex had the club.

**Art:** Yeah, Joe ran it and Willie says he rented the studio for his band practice, part of it, but I remember Joe was in charge. It was Joe who dished out the money.

**Tracy:** He's the one who said, "Okay, I want you, The Brat, and the Illegals." That was pretty much the first shows we did at The Vex.

**Art:** That was the whole melting pot there, The Vex. Now we had a place where we could invite people from the Hollywood scene. It was a great place. It was a great experience.

**Tracy:** Well, they made it the stomping grounds. "Hey, East L.A. bands this night." The local people would show up. After a few shows, word started getting out, people started coming to check it out.

**Art:** X played there. And then the second Vex, at the Paramount Ballroom, DOA played there with the Alley Cats.

**Tracy:** We opened up for DOA and they actually came up to us and said, "You guys are cool." Because they understood what we were doing, they heard our political... I mean, we weren't trying to overthrow anybody. DOA was, I think, more political, but they still respected what we did, you know? Art was talking to Joey Shithead and he was going, "Yeah, you guys ripped it up." It was kind of cool that we were hooking up with bands like that. That's the kind of stuff we should've been playing with, you know? We had to work through all the other networks or whatever to get to that point, but like Art said, the Vex was bringing in Social Distortion, Bad Religion. We didn't play those nights, but we still went because we wanted to see what these bands were about.

**Jimmy:** What were your impressions of The Vex?

**Tracy:** Just a lot of people showing up. We were getting good shows and they kept booking us. Even if we didn't play, Castration Squad played there when they first got together. We were seeing bands that we didn't even know existed, so that was what made it interesting. It got bigger and bigger.

**Art:** It was a hangout spot. We didn't have to go to Hollywood, and for me, I was in my backyard, dude.

**Tracy:** The neighborhood around there, all the kids that were punks, didn't have to drive. They could just walk and they're there.

**Art:** I used to go to The Vex when I was a kid. It was called CYO, Catholic Youth Organization. It was run by the Catholic church. We had social dances there. I was like thirteen, fourteen. That's how Sister Karen (Boccalero) got it and made it artsy, made it for the people, for the neighborhood. Dude, it was awesome. I used to walk by

there everyday to go to Belvedere Junior High School. It was like your home. If you're not playing, it's okay, you're seeing your friends play, and you're meeting up with your friends there.

**Tracy:** It was cheap to get in.

**Art:** It was good. I got in free, whatever, you know? And I knew the guy who was throwing it, Joe. I used to call him "twenty percent" because he'd always say, "You guys get twenty percent." Well, of what? "I only made a hundred bucks. Okay, you get twenty." And that's what he'd tell everybody. That was the pay. But the Plugz would get \$300.

**Tracy:** That's when they started bringing the bands from outside East L.A.

**Jimmy:** So that whole deal they had going, where they would get bands from the Westside and then have bands opening from the Eastside, that was beneficial to you?

**All:** Yeah, of course.

**Tracy:** A lot of people were coming from different cities. Orange County people would come out, the Hollywood people would come out, then you got three different bands from East L.A., OC, and Hollywood. Perfect match. There wasn't really any fights.

**Tony:** Even today, you can't start a band and try to get booked in a club in Hollywood or something like that with a name, or somewhat name, act.

**Art:** It's all PR, man, having the right people behind it. That's what we missed, and that's what we're missing now. If we had a great manager, as good as these festival kids, I know we could do it, play for the thousands and million masses, with all these nice festivals they have out there. That's what I would love to do. And we could compete with the younger bands, too.... Now, there were two Vexes.

**Tony:** There was four, actually.

**Art:** Well, I remember three of them.

**Tracy:** The last was under the overpass.

**Tony:** Right, over on Soto Street.

**Jimmy:** They also had a Vex show at the Vern Auditorium.

**Tony:** But I think they only had one gig there, didn't they? As far as I know, they only had one show there with Black Flag and Mad Society.

**Art:** Oh, Daphne (Mad Society manager). She passed away. She hung around with us a lot.





photos by Angie Garcia

**Tony:** You want to be tight and sound good.

You want to impress people, of course, and satisfy yourself.

**Tracy:** And scare the shit out of them.

**Jimmy:** You mentioned to me once that the Vex was just a club and East L.A. was a scene, and there was a differentiation between the two.

**Tracy:** Well, because the Vex was just a club. The scene was any place you could play. When Joe Suquette had Hot Rod Productions, he got us all these weird little shows, but it was always based at these halls where they would have quinceañeras and all this stuff. But when Joe got The Vex at Self Help, everybody goes, "Oh, that's the scene." Wait a minute. We've been playing since '77/78 and we didn't do the Vex until '80. We were all over the place. We did this before we did the Vex. Now, you gotta remember, it's all business. "Dude, I'm gonna bring these outside bands, but I want you to open up because I want people exposed to you," which worked perfect for us because once we left The Vex and we went out to other places,

everyone was going, "Oh yeah, you're the band from East L.A." We didn't have to say we're Mexicans or anything.

**Art:** See, East L.A. before the Vex was a bunch of backyard parties.

**Tracy:** And dance halls and high schools.

**Art:** And before Thee Undertakers, I'd been in three, four different bands. I was already playing copy music at backyard parties.

#### OUTSIDERS, RIOTS, AND TIRE IRONS

**Jimmy:** Were any of you there the night the first Vex got closed down? (The infamous 11/22/80 show with Black Flag, the Stains, Violent Children, Castration Squad, and the Mau-Mau's, which ended with Self Help Graphics getting trashed and tables shoved out of second story windows.)

What do you remember about that night?

**Tracy:** Tony almost got his ass kicked.

**Tony:** I think he's talking about another night.

**Tracy:** No, that was the night. We left before the riot happened because some guys were trying to punch you and...

**Tony:** Maybe it happened twice then, where they tried to kick my ass. [laughs] I thought he was talking about when the Stains played. I got up on top of this table and was gonna do a stage dive or something.

**Tracy:** No, this was the Black Flag thing. We were in the pit. People were trying to slug him. I grabbed him and tried to pull him and these guys were over other guys trying to hit him. I'm like, "Dude, we gotta get out of here!" Well, as soon as we left, I heard that's when all the shit happened. Everything started going on, the riot, the cameras got broken.

**Tony:** They broke in downstairs. All the artists' stuff that they were working on got messed up.

**Tracy:** And I think the Vex didn't expect that, but Black Flag was pretty aggressive back then. The kids were into that stuff, you know?

**Tony:** It was not only that. The fire marshal was coming down there a lot, I think, because it was over capacity.

**Art:** The Paramount Ballroom (second Vex location) was also a pretty crazy scene, because after a couple of gigs I went to, someone broke into a lot of cars, so the next couple of times there were some Mexican cholos, the hardcore ones, waiting for the people to come out and actually beat them with tire rods and bumper jacks. I saw guys come out on the streets, gangsters from prison, hitting these punk rockers in their heads. Dude, it was *vicious*.

**Jimmy:** So it was a whole different vibe, then.

**Art:** Yeah, it wasn't getting fun anymore.

**Tracy:** It started getting more violent.

**Art:** There's a purpose for that, the music, the movement...

**Tracy:** That's when you started getting into the hardcore punk, and people want to get more hardcore, you know?

**Art:** No, we don't fight like that. It was the gangsters who didn't like people coming into their territory and dressing up. Hey, dude, you see a hardcore cholo, and he sees a punk rocker with a mohawk and all that, he don't like that 'cause they're not like him. It's all about what you're wearing. And I saw it happen from a distance. Even Rudy from the Stains talked about it once when they asked him on KXLU. (Art's probably referring to a gang-related drive-by shooting Rudy and Robert from the Stains witnessed across the street from the Paramount Ballroom.) He said he saw it, and I was there that night when all that shit happened. Actually, there were about twenty to thirty hardcore gang members waiting for people. Once they see you coming out of the ballroom, man, they'd just go into the street and bumper jack you. It was ugly. There's no reason for that. It was stupid.

**Jimmy:** And it's interesting, too, because East L.A. is culturally really conservative. That's why I was asking what the reaction to you guys was before, because there is that reactionary attitude the neighborhoods have.

**Tracy:** Yeah.

**Jimmy:** They don't like a lot of change. They don't like difference.

**Tracy:** Well, I think that's what happened to the scene towards the end. It started getting bigger. It was bringing other bands from outside, and then you have outsiders coming to the inside, and the insiders don't like the outsiders. The East L.A. punks had no problems with anybody, even with the cholos, because we all grew up together and we knew each other. They didn't respect the punk thing, but, "Okay, you grew up in our neighborhood? Okay, you're cool." When you start bringing people from the outside in, blonde hair...

**Jimmy:** And they're putting shit through windows and trashing places...

**Tracy:** Yeah, and then it becomes a whole different thing. It's not a family thing anymore? Then all of a sudden you have The

Brat playing in Hollywood, opening for Adam Ant, and you have us doing something with Suburban Lawns and you've got the Illegals doing something else. That whole family thing kind of fell apart because everybody wanted a record deal, and they were kind of wagging it out there for everybody.

**Art:** A&M was talking to me about something, but it was more a business kind of thing, and at that time we were having problems with what we wanted to do. I knew what I wanted to do because I knew the business, and these guys wanted to have fun. Like, Mike Chaidez would say he never wanted money, and now he has more money than all of us. [laughs]

**Tony:** His wife's a writer for *Heroes*. He's got a daughter that's in a band or something, too. He's managing them or something.

## GOING SIX FEET DEEP

**Jimmy:** When did you guys break up?

**All:** Eighty-two.

**Art:** Just differences in what direction we were going. That was mainly the thing that was going on. They wanted to get crazier in their writing, probably. I remember that.

**Tony:** No, the way I saw it, the drummer, Mike, was pushing to make some changes. That's basically what happened. We had recorded that album, nothing was happening with it, and we weren't playing any shows.

**Tracy:** It was pretty much when the Vex thing was dying out. Even all the other bands were kind of dying out. Everybody just wanted to do their own thing. Unfortunately, there were mistakes made, decisions with different people. Certain people should have been staying and certain people shouldn't have been staying, and it turned out to be the opposite. Even when Art wasn't in the band, me, Tony, and Mike still tried to do it, and Tony even said one time, "This isn't gonna work. We don't have Art no more." Once Art was gone, it was, like, you're taking Bono out of U2, or...you can't get the Ramones back together again. Stupid examples, but I'm saying you took out the one part of the band that was the main function of the band and now you're still trying to function. It just doesn't work. It happens with all bands. You got personality problems.

**Art:** Everything was changing in the air, the atmosphere, in the business.

**Tracy:** You're getting older, you're getting better.

**Tony:** Mike was able to convince me and Tracy that we could do it with... I don't know. He had something with Art or something.

**Art:** It was business. It was music, too.

**Tony:** And it was combined with everything we just said, so we started off in the beginning with me, Mike, and him [Tracy], and he wanted to bring in this other guy named Mike Solis on guitar. So we tried that out for a while, but we couldn't get gigs.

**Tracy:** It wasn't the same.

**Tony:** We did that one recording, a little experimental thing. That was pretty good. That was interesting, but other than that, it just didn't happen after that. We were

supposed to play a Halloween show. I went to that show. It was a big Halloween party and the drummer didn't want to do it because it was raining. Then it stopped raining, and he kind of was gonna change his mind at the last minute about doing it, but Tracy got pissed off and said, "Forget it. I'm not going to play with Mike no more."

**Tracy:** The sound guy left. That's the night that Tony thought he was Bela Lugosi and picked up his cape, ran down the hill, and landed in cactus. [Everyone laughs] Everybody was like, "Oh fuck, your guitar player just ran into a cactus patch."

**Art:** There was another Halloween party in some kind of a hall where we had fog lamps and Tony wanted to come out of a coffin.

**Tracy:** But his cape got stuck. It was like a *Spinal Tap* thing, like the guy in the plastic thing, "I can't get out!" [Everyone laughs] But as far as people asking why Thee Undertakers broke up, we're still friends. It's just shit happened.

**Art:** The thing was we needed a manager. I was running the gigs. I was doing a lot, as far as doing the connections, trying to manage the band. I wasn't elected to do it, but I was just doing it, and the guys would help. We'd do gigs through everybody at times, too. But the scene was dying, the direction was different.

**Tracy:** That's a good point. The East L.A. scene that we were talking about before that was happening was dying just like the Hollywood scene.

**Tony:** The guys who were gonna put out the record did have a meeting with us and Art, and they just couldn't....

**Jimmy:** This is Louie from Roadhouse?

**Tony:** Yeah, Louie and Dan, and they came down to talk to us.

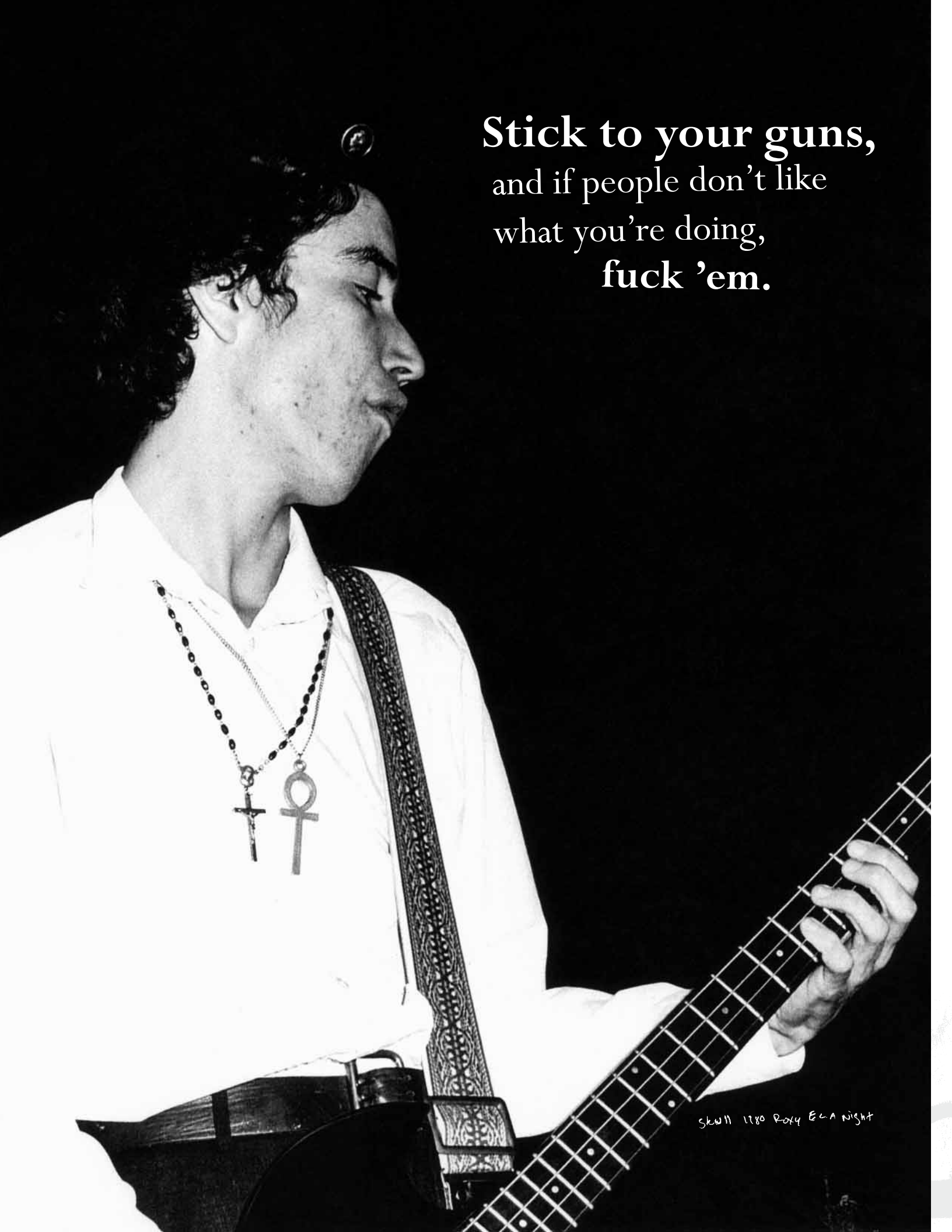
**Tracy:** What should've happened didn't happen. It's just part of what you learn in life. You're doing all this and then, bam, you get smacked, or you hit the wall, or whatever, and, unfortunately, all the other bands were doing that, too. All the other bands we were talking about, they were slowly going off on their own.

**Tracy:** Plus people start getting older. As the years went on, everyone started getting more, "Well, I can do this better than you can do that." And that just kind of happened, too. Everyone's just getting better and better and wanting to do other things, or trying to pull the band into another direction that didn't work, obviously, because you don't have certain people in the band, or you're trying to do this whole new music thing and people are not turning out there. They're like, "Whoa, what happened to you guys? You sound different."

**Jimmy:** You kind of forget what you're about.

**Tracy:** Exactly. It wasn't the same as before. The whole values were lost. All the lyrics got lost. Everything got lost, so it was kind of better that it just ended like that, because it just wasn't going to happen. We were trying to keep it together. We were trying to struggle.





Stick to your guns,  
and if people don't like  
what you're doing,  
fuck 'em.

SKW 1180 Rox4 E-LA Night

## POST-MORTEM

**Jimmy:** So you went to Insulin Reaction next, Tracy?

**Tracy:** Moved to Pomona. Insulin Reaction. Found out that people knew about Thee Undertakers in Pomona. They were just like, "Dude, we know all about the East L.A. scene!" Interesting, Pomona has a punk scene. They go out to Hollywood and East L.A. to see these bands. I'm like, "Wow," you know? I move to Pomona, I start doing other projects because I like to play, but I'm finding out people liked the East L.A. scene, so, I'm sitting at home and I'm like, "Fuck, we fucked up." We just blew it, you know? But I just continued to do stuff.

**Art:** I got a chance to get in a couple of bands in Hollywood, too, but to me, if it ain't any better than what I had, I ain't gonna do it. Why should I regress? Fuck that. It's gotta be at the same level as Thee Undertakers or better.

**Jimmy:** So that was pretty much the last band for you for a long time?

**Art:** No, I play with the guy from Los Illegals, Tony (Valdez). We do a little blues. They'll come over and we'll do some copies or try a little stuff. I've got a lot of lyrics put away. I've got my acoustic there. But as far as bands and stuff, I tried Martial Law, this band with Tito's (Larriva) brother, from Texas. I forgot his name. We had this guy from New York, heavy into his dope, guitar player. Great guitar player when he could make it, but very inconsistent. Lived in the apartments up by Al's Bar (downtown L.A.). It was freaky up there in that apartment; too much trouble, too much babysitting. I was tired of that. I want somebody who can hold his own. Reminded me of Billy Spider, this guy. So I just jammed around with certain bands. That was it.

**Tony:** Me, Tracy, and Mike Solis, who was the rhythm guitar player before Thee Undertakers broke up, we had Rose Hills going, but we didn't really play. We played one good show with Suicidal Tendencies at Shamus O'Brien's. We opened up for them. Lasted about a year.

**Jimmy:** The next major band I remember with you was...

**Tony:** Play Dead. That was with the rhythm guitar player for Thee Undertakers.

**Tracy:** It was more English punk.

**Tony:** Right, more of a straight punk with a harder edge. It was more like a street rock band.

**Jimmy:** How did you go from Play Dead to Media Blitz?

**Tony:** Well, before Play Dead, I was in a band called Rash for a little while. It was punk, but it was like Metallica or Suicidal, kind of. I like that kind of stuff because with punk, you weren't really able to do too much guitar. Then came Play Dead, and then Media Blitz. Media Blitz started off kind of like Rash, more like a Suicidal type of punk, sort of, and then later on, that was Dave from Last Round Up.

## THE BRAT & LOS ILLEGALS

**Jimmy:** Let's talk about some of the other bands that were around at that time. What can you tell me about The Brat?

**Tony:** Art's the one who introduced us to Rudy. How did you know Rudy? I just remember one day practicing and, "Oh, this is my friend Rudy, and he's in The Brat. We're gonna play a gig with them."

**Tracy:** I remember they used to live down the street from where we were rehearsing.

**Art:** Yeah. I used to go see Rudy when they were practicing, and then a gig or something, and it was interesting just to hear originals. Anything that was original, "Oh, yeah, okay. I'll check it out." They were our friends. We were all family. That's the way it felt, you know? There were certain walls you wouldn't pass, or lines you wouldn't pass, but it was competitive, too.

**Tracy:** Well, it was like the interview they did in *Razorcake* (Issue #37). They said it was competitive—"Undertakers would blow us away one night, so the next night we're gonna blow them away," but...

**Art:** But they never did!

**Tracy:** Oh, well. [Everyone laughs] But there was a competitive edge to all the bands.

**Tony:** It was a different style of music. They were more on the poppy side, and we were more kind of harder edged.

**Art:** I didn't feel threatened, because Teresa is who she is, I'm who I am, and you guys... Totally different, but it was good.

**Tracy:** Everyone hung out together, at least, you know?

**Art:** We accepted who we were, we accepted who they were. We enjoyed each other's company. We enjoyed the competition and we enjoyed the music most of all.

**Jimmy:** What did you like about them?

**Art:** I like her lyrics. It was her little struggle through her high school times and different changes she was going through, you know? I always look at lyrics. I always like to listen to lyrics.

**Tracy:** Lyrics always count.

**Tony:** What about Los Illegals?

**Art:** Oh, Tony Valdez, their rhythm guitar player, is my compadre.

**Tony:** What about what they were singing about?

**Art:** It was good, what they were singing. It was just the structure of the music that was a little bit.... It wasn't what I care for. I like more distorted guitars, more rock.

**Tracy:** We respected them, but it wasn't like we were, "Oh, these guys are bad!" [in this case "bad" = good].

**Art:** It was too abstract, too many chops. But it was good. It was different. It was a good band you could put in a studio and get good stuff out of. They were new wave to me.

**Tony:** From what I've heard from Tracy before that when he's talked to people about it, is that Los Illegals were trying to make a statement about how it was being oppressed Chicanos, so to speak. Somebody had asked before how come

we weren't trying to push that avenue. We were just being ourselves.

**Art:** I never wanted to be labeled as having one way of thinking. There are a lot of things out there. You have to have a spectrum of things, of ideas. I know people want to close you down to just one idea that you want to push, and it's not about that. There's a variation of things and how to approach it. You want to approach it all radically.

**Tracy:** And I think that's the thing about the three main bands, was that everybody approached it different. We approached it our way, The Brat approached it their way, the Illegals approached it their way. All the same kind of statements, all the same kind of political Hispanic this and that, but we all took it to different levels. Maybe that's why some of the bands didn't like our messages or whatever, but we still grew up in all the same areas and still had the oppression. We just expressed it in a different musical way. Different styles.

**Art:** Which is good.

**Tracy:** If we all sounded the same, it would've been boring. Even the Stains, take their music. They're writing about some crazy stuff, too, but they were at the same time oppressed, too. They grew up in East L.A., too, but they had a uniform like we did—the trenchcoats. We did the black suits. I don't know if we could say The Brat or the Illegals had a uniform, but...

**Art:** I didn't look at that too much. The Illegals tried to come out radical in their lyrics, which was good. I liked some of the lyrics they were writing about oppression. But the music, to me, wasn't my cup of tea. But I could still listen to them. We got along good sometimes, then towards the end, little things were said... We had a Halloween gig in San Pedro. We had booked there, so we said we were going to do two of them. We would go here, do the gig, and then fly down here and do this other gig.

**Tony:** Which was already over by the time we got there.

**Art:** Los Illegals took our spot, and they were saying they were Thee Undertakers, and they were pissed off at us. And I said, "What are you guys pissed off for? We just had this other gig." Luckily, we were there to support them and be part of the party there. But we started getting the "mad dog" eyes, like "Fuck you guys. Fuck Thee Undertakers." You know, bygones are bygones, man. There's no grudges or nothing. It was all part of it. We were just little bitches hanging around bitching at everybody, you know? But it was good. It was like a family, like if you go back to the *La Opinion* (an L.A.-based Spanish language newspaper), where they had the picture....

**Tracy:** I don't know if you ever saw it, but it was a picture of all of us, all the bands. Los Illegals, Thee Undertakers and we're all on the stairway of the Vex, like every single band member of every single band. Interesting photo.

**Art:** It was awesome. You can see it all the way down to the landing, all the bands. And we were united, man. We came there to do the same thing. In different ways. And everybody had their little followings, whatever. It depends on what you like. I like sugar in my coffee and you like Coffee-mate.



**Jimmy:** How did you meet Dave?

**Tony:** I knew him from Rash. We used to practice at Hyatt Studios in Hollywood, off of Melrose, and I met him there through some of the guys who practiced there. They were in Last Round Up. They asked me to play guitar with him, and we did Media Blitz. We were looking for a singer and I thought about Dave, so I got him to sing.

Then we got Beast (former vocalist for The Tumors, now vocalist for La Bestia) later on because Joe (Media Blitz bassist) knew Beast from hanging out in El Monte. He knew that she was a singer and she would just get up there and jam with the bands sometimes. I guess he had heard her sing and he had seen some other bands with chick singers. He thought it might be a good idea to get a chick singer. I said, "Well, I'm open to the idea," but I really didn't believe that a chick for our style of music would sound good. But when I heard her, I thought yeah, he's right. She knows how to get that raspy, crazy sound out of her voice.

**Jimmy:** She's got that over-the-top stage personality, too.

**Tony:** Right, right. Probably people remember us more with her than with Dave, because the thing with Dave only lasted for a little while, in the beginning.

**Jimmy:** Are you still keeping it going? I know she's off doing other stuff.

**Tony:** I heard she's a clown for a circus now. [Tracy and Art laugh]

**Jimmy:** Yeah, Cirque du Soleil.

**Tony:** Yeah, she's always been into dancing.

She's a dance instructor, too.

**Jimmy:** Are you keeping the band going without her?

**Tony:** No, no. We did a show last year, over there at the Airliner as a favor to a friend. Once in a while, something like that, maybe. But I'm playing in a blues band, Jumping Jack Benny, so I get to do my guitar show-off thing.

**Jimmy:** And the closest to East L.A. after Thee Undertakers for you, Tracy would have been Insulin Reaction and Knucklebone, right?

**Tracy:** Yeah, but all those bands were never like bands so much as projects for me just to keep playing, you know? After a while we couldn't get the shows we wanted, so everyone wanted to leave. Good. Go to the next thing. Over the years, I just kept playing and playing with different people.

I started getting into the psychobilly scene, playing guitar with Dragstrip Demons and doing that for a while, but then I burned out on that. Even writing my own stuff, doing my own things on tape, and then my friend from Anubian Lights hooked me up with Lydia Lunch. I worked with them for a little bit, got to do a five-song EP, went to Europe with them, came back and I came back and just wish Thee Undertakers could've done that because the experience there was a lot different from when we were growing up in the small clubs. Everybody's treating you like a rock star and you're being driven around, you've got rooms.

When we used to play, it was sleeping on the fuckin' floor, and you're in the van

shivering and you're not eating. So as the years progressed up to now, I was able to experience different things and different music and experiment. But even like Art says, when we get together with Thee Undertakers, when we go up there and play, we're the same guys we were twenty-five, thirty years ago. We still have that mentality of, "Hey, fuck you, we're still us. We don't owe you anything, you don't owe us anything, and we like to play."

With the Knucklebone stuff, we hooked up with the Black Jax, and we were finding out there's all these bands in Alhambra. They're still close to East L.A., but everybody's still a punk, you know? It just kind of branched out. Unfortunately, all the bands like that didn't last that long because of the same thing. In the beginning you're all gung ho. "Yeah, we're gonna fuckin' kick ass!" Then your singer shows up drunk, the guitar player can't make it. Things just happen. I think if a band's gonna last forever, it's for a reason and if a band breaks up, it's for a reason. There's always something. Either you're going to connect with your friends, or people you used to play with, or you're gonna not like them or hate them. There are a lot of bands out there still, even from the old East L.A. scene, that don't talk to each other, but that's their issues. I think me, Tony, and Art, we've always had issues, but when we get together we still can play, and we still act like we did back then.

**Art:** We approach it different because when we get together it's rare. Once or twice a year,

ART ROCKY E.L.A NIGHT 1980



maybe. We'll practice a couple of times and we're ready for a gig. It's still in our hearts and it's still a passion. We do the best we can. We don't see each other every day or every other day like we used to. We used to see each other every fuckin' day at one time, for a couple of years. [laughs]

**Jimmy:** Yeah, and after a while, when you have that close of a relationship, you end up like, "Dude, you eat Top Ramen *weirdly*," and you get pissed off about that shit.

**Tracy:** Yeah. [laughs] "You picked your nose wrong."

## RESURRECTION

**Jimmy:** When did you reform?

**Art:** In 2001.

**Tony:** They did that documentary thing [Martin Serrondeguy's film *Mas Alla de los Gritos/ Beyond the Screams*, about the Latino punk/hardcore scene]. He interviewed The Brat or something and showed it at Self Help Graphics.

**Art:** We played three, four songs that night with our old drummer, and then they started going at it again. [Everyone laughs] It's weird. Mike starts talking shit to somebody....

**Tony:** And he wasn't happy because he had to use their drums and he hated playing on those drums. When he came to practice, he was only able to practice with us for twenty minutes.

**Jimmy:** So you guys got George through Media Blitz?

**Tony:** Yeah. I was in East L.A. College and one of his friends, Ignacio, was in the same class I was in. I was in the jazz band, trying

to learn jazz a little bit for one semester. Ignacio was a drummer and I told him I was into punk and stuff, and he said, "Well, there's this guy George and have you heard of...." I think he started telling me about the Thrusters and Misled. He said George played drums pretty good, so when we were looking for a drummer at one point, I called and said, "Hey, your friend Ignacio recommended me to you." And that's how I got to know George.

**Tracy:** And the interesting thing with George is when he came to the first practice, he already knew the songs, and he was able to do them...not exactly like Mike, but he was able to do—except when Art first saw him and he was [imitates crazy thrash drumming] and Art was like, "Dude, what the fuck?" His energy just fits us, you know? We don't even have to look at him when we're playing. That's the main thing in a band: you have to look at the drummer for changes sometimes, but if we're playing and he's not even looking at us, cool. Sometimes he's a little bit overboard, but he was able to do the same rolls on the toms, he kept the beat, and made it aggressive.

**Tony:** In Media Blitz, we were playing this backyard party and he had long hair. I turn around and all I can see is his hair [imitates furious drumming], like Cousin It. [Everyone laughs] I don't know if it was foggy, but it was so cold that night, and he was hot, right? I turn around and smoke is just coming off his whole body. It looked weird, like an effect. It was funny.

**Jimmy:** Are you guys recording new stuff? I remember Scott Matsuda [another legendary

eastside punk drummer who played in Thee Undertakers] mentioned something like that.

**Tony:** We started on some new songs a while back. We've got some songs that we've kind of put on the shelf, but we were performing them for a little bit.

**Tracy:** Well, like Art said, everybody's busy. It's kind of hard to get together. Everybody's doing other projects.

**Art:** It's funny because Tracy came out with some songs, and I wrote lyrics to about eight or nine of them. But the criticism came: "Well, this sounds like this. This sounds like that." And George came down with Tony one time to show him, and George couldn't do the drumming he wanted.

**Tony:** It was a completely different style from what we were normally doing and it was going in a different direction. The first stuff we were doing sounded like Undertakers, but the other stuff, I guess they were trying to do something different and I didn't feel comfortable. George didn't feel comfortable.

**Art:** See? But it was still Undertakers stuff.

**Tony:** But it was more something Tracy and Art were collaborating on.

**Art:** Just bar fuckin' songs, you know? Good hardcore bar, some of it with a little bit more—I don't want to say fuckin' rap—but I was talking more radical, more like a vocal just shouting than coming into a chorus singing. I was just trying to change it up, and what got me going on that was when I listened to Rage Against The Machine. I didn't want to sound like Rage, but that was a couple of songs that I wanted to do, but in our style.





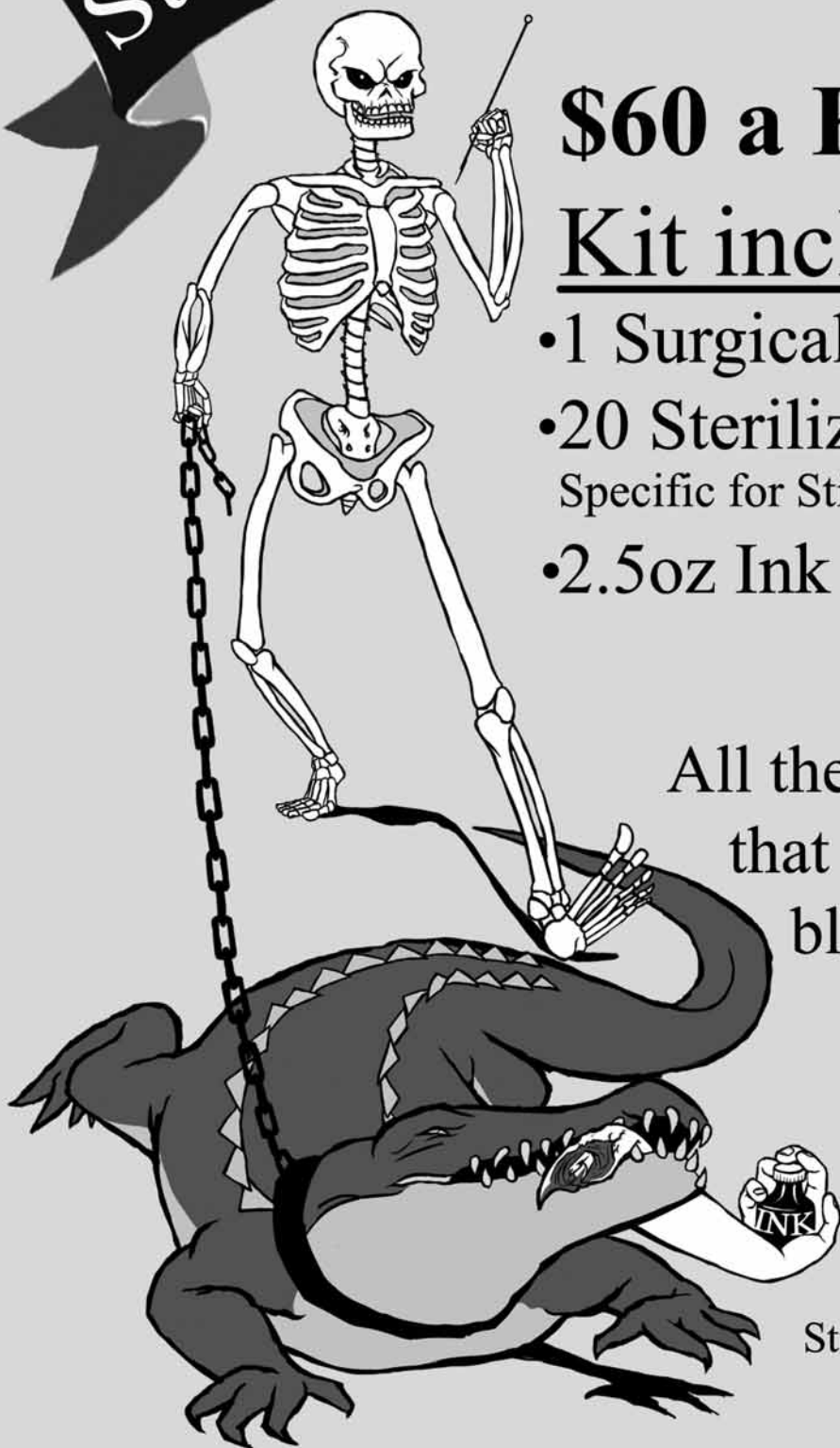
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## THE STAINS

**Jimmy:** What can you tell me about the Stains?

**Art:** They're crazy, man! [Everyone laughs] Fuck, I didn't want to be like the Stains!

**Tony:** I tried to start a band with Jesse [Fixx, the Stains' original bass player]. Never really got off the ground, but we were trying to put some songs together.

**Tracy:** I would say they were probably the most outsiders of the group. They were so much more aggressive. They were another good band. Robert, a great fuckin' guitar player, the drummer, the bass.

**Jimmy:** Do you remember anything about their "gang," the Stormtroopers and the Stainettes?

**Art:** No. I heard about it, though.

**Tracy:** We never experienced any problems with them.

**Tony:** At that time, we weren't hanging around with them.

**Tracy:** They had their own crowd, and if they had parties, they would have their Stormtroopers or whatever, but when they did shows outside of that, those people didn't really show up. Plus, Black Flag pretty much took them under their wing and that's how the Stains got their name out there. They were playing Huntington Beach and all, but they were acting crazy. Remember Atomic Café? Two of the Stains were in there and they started trouble. They kicked them out, somebody threw a beer bottle, here comes this big Chinese buff dude. Remember, Art? You were there.

**Art:** He was climbing the poles, dude.

**Tracy:** Yeah, he was doing pull-ups and looking for them because they threw a bottle, and they took off running.

**Art:** This guy was a *hit man*. He was a hired gun from China. He was like Bruce Lee, dude.

**Tracy:** It's funny, because the Stains were all crazy, and it was like, "You gotta get outta here!" They leave, we hear a bottle break, and everybody's like, "Aww, fuck, they're gonna start trouble." But all of a sudden, here comes Conan, and they took off.

**Art:** He came out of the back, like one of those Asian movies, man. [Everyone laughs].

**Tracy:** It's like you're expecting all this trouble and all of a sudden this big, tall guy and everybody's like [meekly], "Just keep eating. Nothing's gonna happen..." But, see, those are actually fun times, because we didn't hang out with the Stains, and I don't really think the Stains wanted to hang out with us, but we still all came from the same neighborhood. They just had their own way of doing things which made them what they were. When their album came out, it was great.

## You're always gonna have a kid that wants to play three-chord fast songs.

**Jimmy:** The aggression.

**Art:** Yeah, with the effects that Tom (Morello) does, I know Tony could do, but not to the extreme. And then one time I go, "Dude, you didn't come with no effects or nothing," so he comes back with this big ol' fuckin' board. [Everyone laughs] And we didn't even use it! But you know, it was just trying to change it to be updated. We could bang out ten punk songs if we wanted to, but fuck, you know?

**Art:** A little versatility, you know? A little change, some hooks, little patches here and there. And we did this little song called "Set It Off."

**Tracy:** We were trying them live and they actually went off well.

**Tracy:** We still play once in a while. We played The Scene and we were like, "We're going backwards." We're not big rock stars or whatever, but we did La Mano Press (an outdoor show they played in 2006 with The Brat, Van Pelts, and others) and there were a lot of kids there.

**Art:** Let me tell you exactly what's going on. We practice our asses off, we get together, we get excited, we go to the gig, and a couple of times they were fucked-up gigs, dude. We didn't play.

**Tracy:** Yeah.

**Art:** Remember you [Tony] were sleeping in the car one time? [Everyone laughs] Dude, there were all kinds of fuckin' bands waiting to play and we're up there in a smaller room than this.

**Tony:** More like a rehearsal place.

**Art:** I go, "What the fuck are we doing here?"

**Tracy:** But they tell you, "Oh, you're playing in the big room" and you're like, "Okay, it's gonna be cool. It's gonna be a big show,"

and then you get there and it's like a fuckin' rehearsal studio with three rooms and three different bands. You're like, "Wait..."

**Art:** It happened two or three times where a gig went bad. "Aw, I'm not gonna do this shit no more." I go, "Dude, let's play festivals. Let's get a manager, somebody to put us out there." I don't give a fuck about money, just get a good gig.

**Tony:** The best one we did so far was The Echo one.

**Art:** The Echo was good. La Mano Press was good, too.

**Tony:** The Echo one was good because there were people there. We played with The Gears, Axxel was supporting us. He kept telling people on the microphone, "Go buy Thee Undertakers CD."

**Tracy:** When we did La Mano Press, that was like, whoa—it was freezing.

**Art:** That was like a little festival.

**Tracy:** But that was cool because you had a skateboard ramp, you had a bar, you had a taco stand in the back. It was like a Mexican Lollapalooza. It worked for us. We're not gonna be this huge band. We know that, but it's satisfactory to play in front of 300 people instead of getting paid \$300 and playing in front of ten people. It doesn't make any sense to me. I'd rather have a crowd out there.

**Art:** I don't care about the money because I know we can compete with that.

**Jimmy:** Are you guys a little surprised by the reception you guys have been getting, that people remember you?

**Tracy:** Actually, no, because some of the kids I talk to, their parents used to listen to us, so that makes it interesting.

**Tony:** That Scene show we did, they told us, "You guys ripped." I was like, "Yeah right." It's just that some rooms you go in and you play and all you can hear is your Marshall. The monitors ain't good enough and you can't really hear what you're doing too well. We're kind of struggling to try and keep the rhythm going, but they did a recording of it, and I got the recording, Greg from Artifix Records, and the brother from TSOL—one of them did the video and one of them did the recording on a computer—and I heard it a couple of weeks ago. It sounds pretty good. So I was, "Oh, so that's what they're talking about. That's why they're saying, 'You guys ripped. You guys sound tight.'" And it did sound pretty good, actually.

**Tracy:** The problem is when you're onstage, you hear one way and the audience is out there, everybody goes "You guys are bad," and I'm like, "Really? I thought we sucked."

**Art:** I just feel the energy and the emotion, dude, and there's gonna be mistakes.

**Tony:** The thing about Thee Undertakers, me and the drummer were always like, "we want to go out there and blow people's minds."

**Art:** So give 'em acid. [Art and Tracy laugh]

**Tony:** To blow people's minds. You want to be tight and sound good. You want to impress people, of course, and satisfy yourself.

**Tracy:** And scare the shit out of them.

### DIG THE NEW BREED

**Jimmy:** In what ways do you think the kids, the punks now, have an advantage over you guys? What do they have going for them now that you didn't have?



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**Tracy:** [smiles] They're younger.

**Tony:** One thing for sure is that it's a lot more accepted than it was back when we were doing it. In a way, there's a better chance for them to get somewhere with it, and in another way, there's just so many bands out there now.

**Tracy:** But it's kind of cool. A lot of the younger kids that I've talked to out here, they're only seventeen, eighteen. They listen to Black Flag, The Germs, The Weirdos, The Bags, Thee Undertakers, and they dig that stuff. They don't listen to any of the new punk bands, Green Day or whatever. They don't consider them punk. It's interesting that these kids still have respect for the older thing even though when you go see the older bands they're like, "Oh, they look old." But they still respect the music, and I think what's kind of cool is that what we got

influenced by, now we're influencing other people and other bands. It's gonna keep going down the generations.

Punk's gonna be around forever, just like rap or metal. I mean, people say, "Oh, it died; it's gonna die." You're always gonna have a kid that wants to play three-chord fast songs. Just picking up a guitar, or you're gonna have a band with a great guitar player but they wanna be metal or they wanna be goth. I mean, music is music. It's gonna keep going on. It's never gonna die. The problem today now, though, you don't have labels. You can download your songs. That's what's killing the music pretty much, I think, and that's why a lot of the bands are not gonna get on labels. But we struggled for so long. We still wanna do it here and there if the gig or whatever's right. But that's the main thing: it's got to be right. We can't out and do like we used to, play backyards and play here and there.

**Art:** Unless it's an occasion or something, but rarely. But we want to play. I think we have the potential and the energy and the experience to play at another level, like I keep on saying, the festivals.

**Tony:** If it's worth our while, in other words.

**Jimmy:** What's the one thing that you think you took from punk?

**Tracy:** Attitude. Belief. You know, just stick to your guns, and if people don't like what you're doing, fuck 'em. Everybody says, "What's punk to you?" I go, "It's all about attitude." You don't have to dress punk.

**Art:** It's making a statement, for me, something I always believed in. I'm a history buff and I like revolution, what it's all about, about the poor and making changes.

**Tracy:** We're still political.

**Art:** You've got to do it in a structural way because everything's so corporate.

## THE VEX

**Jimmy:** What about The Warriors?

**Art:** That's Brian Qualls.

**Tracy:** They played with us a few times, I think, with the Illegals, but they didn't fit in because they weren't a punk band. They were more like a blues band, but where it wasn't typical blues. It was like punky blues, but that's what made them kind of interesting, because it was like, "Wow, there's another band doing something different."

**Tony:** They were more like a hard rock band, weren't they?

**Tracy:** But they made everything versatile.

**Art:** But Brian never reached out to... the stuff we did blew him away. It was something out of left field for him. He wouldn't touch the stuff we did. It wasn't his cup of tea, and that's all there was to it. I got his new CD. It's still just basic rock 'n' roll, man. Talks about the Lord in a different way, in a powerful way, but it wasn't part of our scene.

**Jimmy:** Which is interesting, because they're kind of considered part of that whole Vex scene. Like you said, it was like another bookend. What about the Violent Children?

**Tony:** That's another short-lived band.

**Tracy:** Saw them at The Vex. I thought they were kind of Stains proteges, but they were actually good. I can't say these bands took from us and were doing it, but as we started slowly not playing as much, these young bands started coming out, and Violent Children, Tracy (Sludge, their vocalist) was in your face, and he had a good band behind him, you know? There was another band called The Vex. Remember them? They played at the Pico Rivera Sports Arena. He had a pope belt buckle on. They almost sounded like The Jam, but kind of an East L.A. punky way. So you're starting to realize, "Okay, these guys don't want to sound punk, but they're listening to The Jam. They're listening to all these different English bands and bringing it into their own style."

**Tony:** There was the Girl Scoutz.

**Tracy:** The Girl Scoutz did the same thing.

**Tony:** And the Rentz.

**Tracy:** I thought the Girl Scoutz were pretty good. Why Nut. Hey Taxi. They were kind of the first gay punk band.

**Tony:** They weren't actually from East L.A.

**Tracy:** But they played Vex a lot.

**Art:** They always called to book us.

**Tony:** They supported us, yeah, and we supported them.

**Jimmy:** What do you remember about Why Nut?

**Tony:** Wasn't the drummer one of the drummers that was in the Stains, Louie?

**Tracy:** Yes.

**Jimmy:** Were they a hardcore band?

**Tracy:** No, they were kind of a poppy punk band, I would say, but they were still good. But Hey Taxi, when we first saw them, the singer and the guitar player were lovers, but the way they approached it, nobody would... It wasn't like anti-gay because they knew they were gay, but just the way the singer came off, everybody was like, "Fuck, this dude's crazy." He's like, what, six-something? I mean this dude was *tall*. He was doing all these weird moves and we're like, "We've never seen this before..." The music was good. Spider was a great guitar player. That's the thing. All these bands that were coming out, they were already prepared to play. They were already good musicians. It wasn't like the early punk scenes were—I hate to say it—like when the Germs played, Darby's drunk and falling on the floor. A lot of bands were taking themselves seriously. That's what made all those bands from when Thee Undertakers were still kind of not playing, but all of a sudden you had all these other bands coming out. And somehow we started hooking up with all of them and they want to play with us.

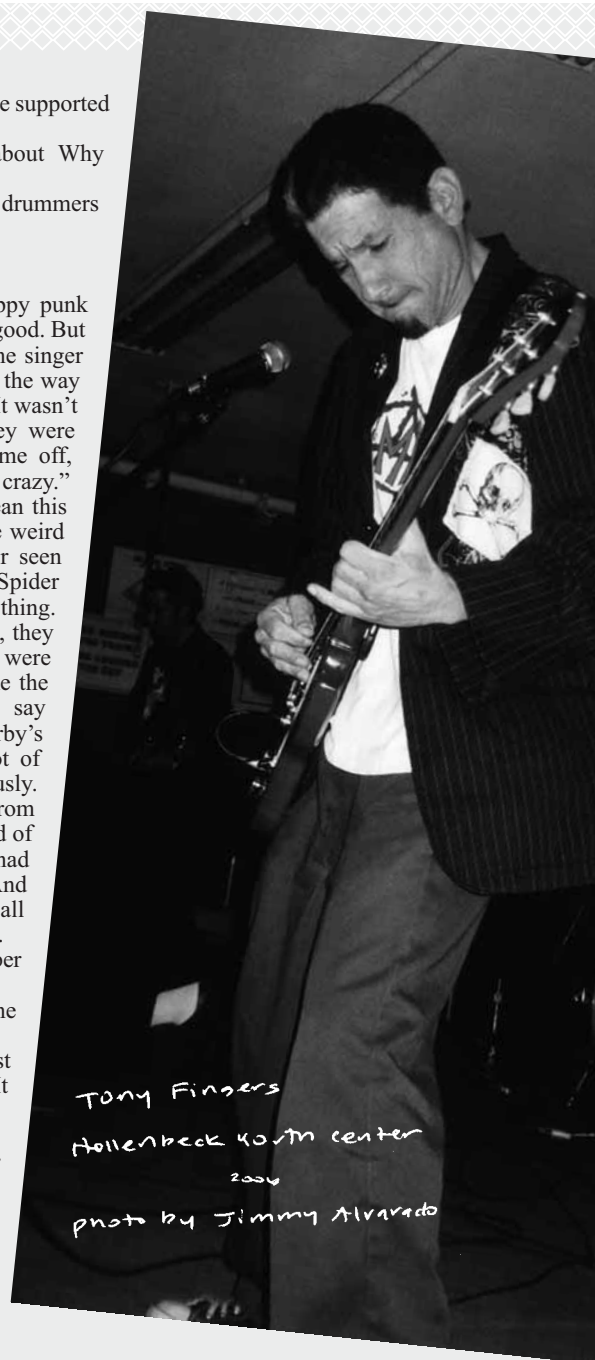
**Jimmy:** What do you guys remember about the Girl Scoutz?

**Tony:** That was Rudy's (Medina of The Brat) cousin, wasn't it?

**Art:** Yeah. You know, they were just here and there, man. Here and gone. It wasn't consistent.

**Tony:** It only lasted for a little while.

**Art:** Right, it was like *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*. It just blew over.







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**Tracy:** I think we're the same way that we were back then. We still have that attitude. We can support things. We can't do anything about it, but...

**Art:** The only thing we can do is write about it.

**Tracy:** Yeah, speak out about it, and we'll continue doing that.

**Art:** And that's what I would do all that time. A lot of the stuff I write nowadays is just politics, and a lot of stuff is spiritual now, and about relationships, but not lovey-dovey stuff.

**Jimmy:** Do you still consider yourself a punk?

**Tracy:** Yeah, to a point. We don't have mohawks.

**Art:** I think I'm still a punk at heart and mind. In a lot of ways, I'm still a punk rocker and I'm an asshole to a lot of people. I'm stubborn, and I'm hard-headed.

**Tracy:** Just the way we were back then.

**Art:** I'm very open to ideas, and I'm very team-mated with people I work and deal with. I listen to opinions and compromise, but if they're not rational, they're not practical or reasonable because of ego and all that shit, then I'll walk away and I'll tell them straight out, "You're full of shit."

**Tracy:** I think people are still interested in the whole scene back then because there's still things we didn't talk about today that happened. There's so much that happened that it would take hours. You had the bands and then you had the inner conflict, and you're always gonna have that. There was so much stuff going on back then that when we were young. It was just, "Yeah! Fuck yeah!" It just blows by you and now we're just, "What the fuck?"

**Art:** The thing is back then we had no responsibilities. The responsibility was the band. You get older and now you get more responsibilities one way or the other.

**Tracy:** Some people have given up, period. Just started families and don't want to play anymore. We've pretty much been the opposite. Tony likes doing what he does, I like doing what I do, Art likes doing what he does, but yet we can still get together and do what we used to do.

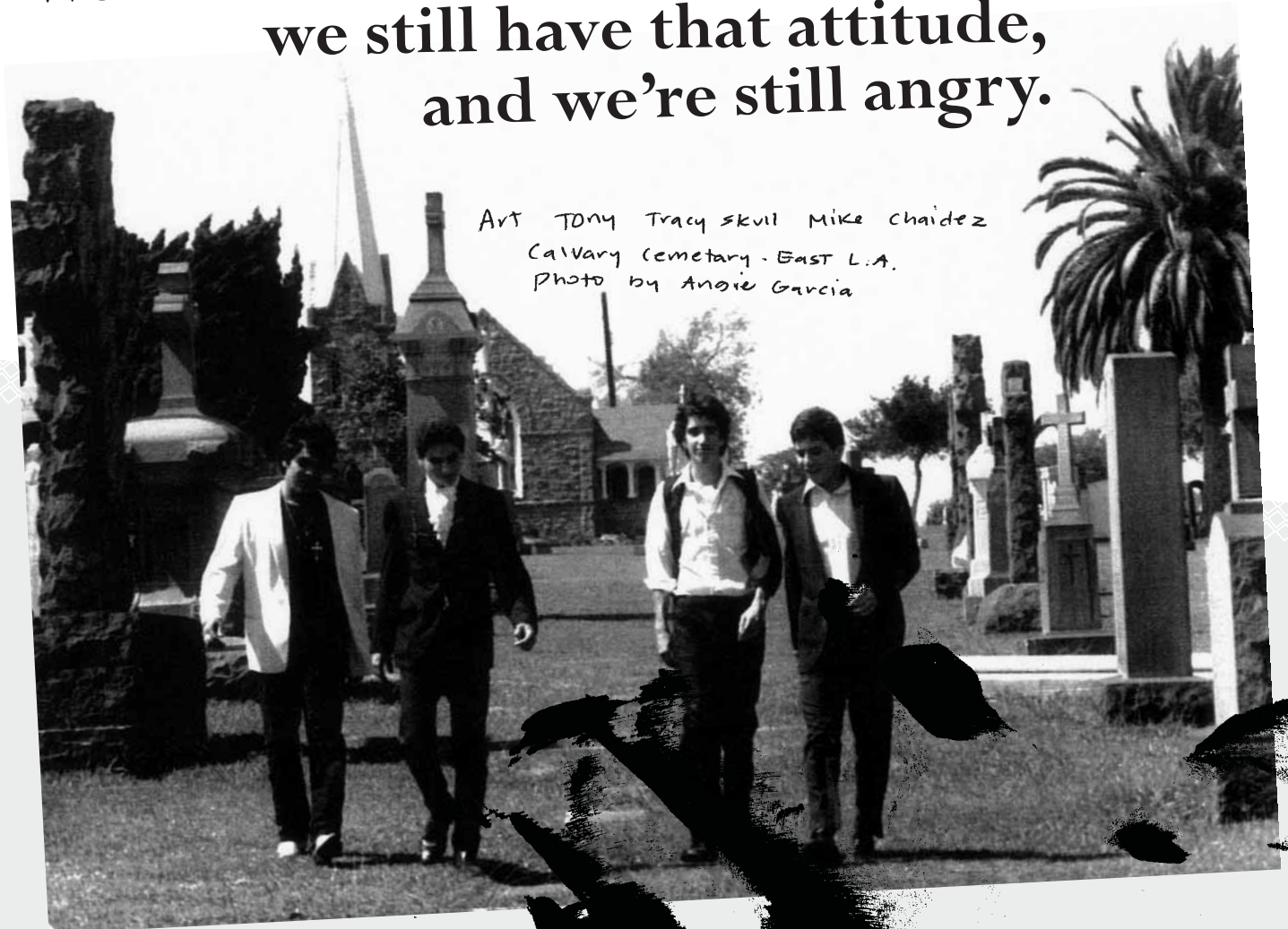
**Art:** And then, too, you let bygones be bygones, and bury the hatchet on a lot of old stuff that passed. Quit living in the past and holding grudges.

**Tracy:** And that's why a lot of people trip on us because we can still work together. I mean, we're not playing every week and practicing every week, but if we need to do something or if something comes up, yeah, we can do it. We still have the heart, we still have that attitude, and we're still angry.



We still have the heart,  
we still have that attitude,  
and we're still angry.

ART TONY Tracy skul Mike chaidex  
Calvary Cemetery - East L.A.  
Photo by Angie Garcia







# DAYLIGHT

**DAYLIGHT ROBBERY** is a trio of good people playing good music. Bearing previous and current members of Manhandlers, Pedestrians, Scotia Widows, Dearborn SS, Punch In The Face, and Ottawa (just to mention a few), they are no strangers to the labor of love that has steadily built up Chicago's DIY punk scene. Dark, driving songs, laced by the lyrical back-and-forth vocals between David and Christine, give this band the extra "sump'n special" that creates dark, timeless music. Sarah and I interviewed Daylight Robbery in their van on the highway barreling home to Chicago the day after a St. Louis show. Being both fans and friends of the band, we were excited to help spread their gospel. Their LP, entitled *Through the Confusion*, is out now on Residue Records.

Interview by  
Annie Saunders  
and Sarah Ryczek  
Photos by Annie  
Saunders  
Layout by  
Todd Taylor

Jeff: drums  
Christine: bass  
David: Guitar, vocals





# ROBBERY

**Sarah:** Somewhere on the highway in southern Illinois... in a van with Daylight Robbery.

**Jeff:** Roughly, Springfield.

**Annie:** So, David and Christine, you're married. There are so many memorable husband and wife teams in bands: Pierced Arrows, for one example. Is this an important part of what makes your band such a tight unit, or is it just coincidental information to the band?

**Christine:** I think it was just a natural thing for us to do once we started dating. We've both been playing music for so long that it seemed to make sense.

**David:** Yeah, it's important to Christine and me. I'd like to think that the band doesn't need that in order to be functional, but the band is an important aspect of why we're a couple.

**Annie:** Does it solidify you two as a family to play music together?

**Christine:** It's one of many things that it does.

**David:** Being able to fart together. That's more important.

**Annie:** Wow, no one in my band is married, and farting is not an issue. Farts come freely.

**Sarah:** How does the dynamic work? You were both in bands where you weren't married to another member. How is this different? David's been in other bands, like the Pedestrians, where he wasn't involved with any members.

**Jeff:** Well, David and Jordan... it was a torrid love affair.

**David:** Only legal in Massachusetts.

**Annie:** Jordan has a wife and baby.

**Christine:** Well, at breakfast yesterday, Anna (wife of Residue





Records guy, Jordan) asked their son Sammy to point at "Daddy" and he pointed at David. [Laughing and catcalls ensue.]

**Christine:** Wait, what was the question?

**Sarah:** How is this different?

**Christine:** Well, there's a lot less drama in this band, except when Jeff acts up.

**Annie:** So, Jeff, are you like the adopted son of the band?

**Jeff:** Uh huh.

**Annie:** If David and Christine argue, do you feel like you have to take a side?

**Jeff:** They don't get in arguments. It's weird; it's like they're androids or something.

**Annie:** Or happily married and content?

**Jeff:** Yeah... weird!

**Christine:** We definitely get grumpy, mostly at practice. But we never fight. Not about band stuff, anyway.

**Annie:** So you're able to separate the art from the personal?

**Christine:** We've just never had to. There's no separation, really. We're so laid back.

**Annie:** True. You are some of the most chilled-out people.

**Annie:** It is hard to get everyone all in one place at the same time.

**Christine:** I like our setup because I work a lot, and I can't always control when I will be getting home. It's less stressful to just have to go home, not home and then to a practice space.

**David:** Yeah, don't get me wrong. It has its advantages, but there is something nice about going to a practice space. The other band I'm in practices at a space called Superior Street. [Boos and hisses]

**David:** Yeah, I hate it too.

**Jeff:** It's like the Guitar Center of practice spaces. Way too "pro attitude, pro gear" for my taste. Too many Pearl Jam covers at once going on in that building.

**Annie:** Well, speaking of pro gear David, I wanted to ask you about your penchant for building amps. Did you build the amp you use in Daylight Robbery?

**David:** Well, I've been using a Fender amp to play live. I did build one, but it's not super reliable. I need to get some work done on it. I did make one from scratch that I've used on all the records, but it's not loud enough to use at shows.

instruments do their part. His guitar had the scratchiest sound. I'm just paraphrasing here, but he talks about it in that movie (*We Jam Econo*)...

**Sarah:** The buzzsaw sound...

**David:** I don't want to emulate his guitar sound, but I admire that he had a philosophical point of view on why the guitar should sound the way it does. Also, I always liked the Crass guitar sound, which is similar.

**Jeff:** And Joy Division, where the guitar is way off in the distance.

**David:** I really like the way that the lead guitarist in the Pixies... ahh.... what's his name?

**Jeff:** Joey?

**David:** Yeah, Joey Santiago! I like how he plays guitar. I don't think I sound like him, but I just like...

**Sarah:** The aesthetic the guitar sound puts into the song as opposed to the sound itself.

**Annie:** The Pixies are very distinct too. They sound like there are eighteen different layers of cake in there. One chord is multi-leveled. But that's what I like about Daylight Robbery as well. And it's cool that you're a three-piece

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**David:** It's funny because the practice space is in the basement of our house. It is a little too easy to just wander downstairs whenever Jeff shows up and play for a while. It's so convenient to have this space in our own house. In fact, it's one of the reasons that we got a house in the first place. But there is something nice about packing up your stuff and going to play someplace else. It feels like you're getting something done. You can't just be like, "Fuck it, I'm tired tonight. Let's just go upstairs and watch TV."

**Annie:** There's definitely something to that. I used to be in a band with my boyfriend, and we also worked and lived together. We just had no separation, and that may have ultimately been the wedge that broke us up. You guys at least have your work...

**Christine:** For now, anyways. We've talked about trying to start a business together someday, but if we did that, then it would be like everyday, everything together.

**Jeff:** I don't know. This band's been a lot more productive than other bands I've been in where we did have a separate practice space. I mean Punch In The Face had a bi-annual song, or a quarterly one at best.

**Annie:** One of the things I really like about Daylight Robbery is that the guitar style is so distinct. Like, a song could start playing and I automatically know that David Wolf is playing. When you were making your amp, did you have your own sound in mind? Were you trying to emulate a certain style of guitar tone?

**David:** Well, it's basically a Fender circuit, and there's really nothing revolutionary about it. There's not a lot of difference between it and an off-the-shelf Fender Deluxe. A lot of bands use that amp, so...

**Annie:** So, basically, you're saying it's just your sweet riffs?

**David:** No! No! It's subtly different, but I think it's the combination of the guitar, amp, and how you set the knobs. I'm pretty conventional as to what kind of guitar sounds I like. And I have a tendency to like them more just as an idea than something I try to emulate. I really like bands where the guitar sound is chosen specifically to be textural. For instance, we were talking about D. Boon before the interview started. He specifically turned the bass off because the guitar is a treble instrument and let the other

because, to not be boring, each person has to play his or her instrument like a lead.

**Sarah:** You've had a couple different drummer changes and, from my perspective, it seems like you guys have evolved a lot with each change. How is it, Jeff, being in the band now? Daylight Robbery is kind of different than some of the bands you've been in most recently.

**Jeff:** I think I probably make the band a bit more agro than it used to be.

[Annie breaks into giggle fits]

**Sarah:** Rageful?

**Jeff:** Yeah. I guess I'm used to playing in more aggressive bands. Also, since it's a three piece, I feel like I have to fill up more space. So I play like I'm being paid by the kick drum hit. I've played in bands with two guitars or one really loud guitar, and I feel a bit more exposed in this band.

**Sarah:** David and Christine, do you want to add to that and talk a little about the evolution of the band?

**Christine:** I think we've come a long way and learned a lot from each different drummer that we've had.

**Annie:** How many have there been?





**Christine:** Well, technically, there have been four because when we first started David was playing drums in addition to guitar. We'd write songs together and then demo stuff. Then we met up with Trish (drummer of Chicago band, Condénada) and she helped us kind of become a band.

**Sarah:** I remember the first show you guys played at the Albion House (in Chicago). We were all standing there thinking it was going to be pretty cool, and then we heard those songs and we were like "Man, they are really writing some songs in their house!" The songs have always been really punchy, really good and driving. But over time they've become so thoughtful, too. You can tell that you've put a lot of effort and energy into them. How do you feel when you get to a show and you play with bands that have obviously just thrown together a bunch of shit?

**Christine:** I've never really thought about it that way. Our band right now just works so well together—feels so natural—that we don't have to over-think everything. We obviously think about our songs as we write them, but I don't compare ourselves to other bands. They've got a different thing going on.

**Jeff:** Most times when we play a show I'm watching the opening band and seeing things that they do better than we do. Even when I don't like the band, I still notice things that they do well and I could improve in my own playing. I never see what other bands are doing as half-assed because I can see things in my own playing that are also half-assed.

**David:** Yeah, I'll never pick apart a band saying that they should have scrapped this song or they shouldn't have played that song. Sometimes, if I've seen a band that I know pretty well play the same set fifteen times

then I'll think they could at least rearrange their songs, you know? But that's also their choice, and that's how they do it.

**Jeff:** Yeah, we never play with bands that sound like P.O.D. (alt-metal band from the 1990s/early 2000s) or whatever, so I'm not usually in an environment where I could mercilessly pick apart a band.

**Christine:** We've been really lucky to have played with some great bands.

**Annie:** Right now, there are some amazingly strong bands in Chicago, and I think you guys are part of the backbone of that strength. There's so many great people here, and it's not delegated to just hardcore or just this or just that. Everybody's in kind of a different band, and it makes for a really rich scene. Since you guys play sort of a non-traditional kind of music, for Chicago at least, do you ever feel like you're on the outside, or are you totally engrossed in this scene of thirty-something Chicago punks?



**If David and Christine  
argue, do you feel like you have  
to take a side?**

**They don't get in  
arguments. It's weird; it's like  
they're androids or something.**

**Or happily married and content?**

**Yeah... weird!**

[We giggle about how old we are.]

**Sarah:** Old punks.

**Christine:** I don't really feel like we fit in particularly anywhere. I feel like we can play a garage show or a hardcore show, but I don't really feel like we're easily defined as a particular type of band, which I think is good and bad. It's good that we can play different kinds of shows and not get stereotyped. And I like the variety of bands that we get to play with.

**Annie:** I think you have that kind of sound that may differ from the hardcore band you're playing with, but it still appeals to the same people. It's appreciated as DIY punk in the same way as other bands. You're not "outside" at all.

**David:** I feel like we're often "that band" on a show that's not loud, you know? Like, we're the band on the bill that's in the scene, but has the different, token sound. But I

don't know how true that is. It's how I feel sometimes. But I can also make comments like that to other people and they're like, "No, that doesn't make sense to me."

**Annie:** So, David is traditionally known around town as the Wolfman. And now, by default, Christine is Mrs. Wolfman. But Jeff Rice, I've never known you as anything but Jeffrice, first and last name together.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Do you have a nickname or should we try and come up with one? Do you even want one or are you happy being Jeffrice?

**Jeff:** Well, maybe "Rice Rice Baby."

**Sarah:** Nice! Done and done!

**Annie:** Or maybe "Do the Motherfucking Jeff Ricepicker?"

**Jeff:** Yeah, I don't know how I got stuck with the first-name-last-name combination.

**Sarah:** It's not like we have a lot of other Jeffs in the scene.

**Jeff:** I think maybe at one point there was, like maybe me and Jeff Jelen being in the same band led to that.

**Annie:** He's another first-name-last-name guy.

**Jeff:** Yeah, I've never gotten to the bottom of this.

**Annie:** Do you feel slighted? Would you like a nickname?

**Jeff:** Oh, I'm totally fine having a very productive reign.

**Annie:** In Manipulation, we've foisted nicknames on each other. Like Tristan is Triscuit. And Scott is Biscotti, but I like to call him Noodles. All food names.

**Jeff:** Isn't Noodles in the Offspring? Is that the guitarist?

**Annie:** I don't know, but I think it's just because Scott goes "doodlidoollidoollido!" on the guitar. So I just forced it on to him. No one else calls him that.

**Christine:** I'd rather be called C-Wolf than Mrs. Wolfman. That's my nickname at work.

**Annie:** C-Wolf! I like that!

**Jeff:** Sounds like a top-secret naval project!

**Annie:** Yeah, before you were Xteen.

**Christine:** Mariam (singer of Condénada) calls me Frosty.

**Sarah:** Why?

**Christine:** I don't know why. I've had so many nicknames over the years...Frostine... Frosty...

**Jeff:** Did you look like a snowman at any point?

**Sarah:** A big round, white hairdo?

**Christine:** I think it's Queen Frostine from the game Candyland.

**Annie:** Jeff, as a sound guy, have you ever intentionally made a band sound like shit because they were assholes?

[Silence]

**Annie:** Have you been tempted?

**David:** Well, there was some band where I intentionally did something, but it inadvertently made them sound like shit. There was a band that played that The Gaia space, and they had an electric cello. Somebody had loaned me an effects unit and I had it patched in to hear what it sounded like. I was twiddling knobs and whatever. After one song, the girl was like, "What the hell is going on? This sounds like crap up here!"

**Jeff:** That's what they get for having an electric cello.

**Christine:** Didn't Robert Collins' band Malachi have a cello player? They were really amazing.

**Annie:** Yeah, but his beard-awesomeness trumps cello.

**Sarah:** Okay, I have a question about "White Sheets in the Street" off your new record, *Through the Confusion*. It's a great record. Can you talk about that song's meaning and how you go about writing songs?

**Christine:** Well, I can tell you what "White



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Sheets in the Street” is about. I was riding my bike home from work in Pilsen and I saw a dead body in the street. It was the weirdest, most surreal thing I’ve ever witnessed in the city.

**Annie:** Was it just by itself?

**Christine:** No. People were around it. It had happened within the hour. It was a woman who, I found out later, had been crossing the street and was hit by a car—a hit and run—and then run over by a bus. So, she was hit twice. There was a sheet over her body, but when they lifted the sheet, I saw her body. It really affected me. The song “White Sheets in the Street” was about that, wondering who that person was. I mean, these things happen in a city, but they just sort of stay with you. A lot of our songs are like that—about the weird shit that happens to you or the crazy people you encounter.

**Annie:** It’s weird how desensitized you get to shit like that. When I first moved to the city, I was terrified of the gunfire. Now, there’s shooting nearby and I barely look up, you know? It’s only if you hear the sirens that you worry if someone was hurt. It sucks.

**Sarah:** Even just listening to the music of “White Sheets in the Street” takes you by surprise. It doesn’t sound like the other songs on the record. It puts you in a very present moment, and I thought it was probably about something serious like that. Do you write the words first or the music?

**Christine:** Well, it goes both ways. Usually we write the riff first, but there’s no rule for how we write the songs. Sometimes, David will even come in with both lyrics and music.

**David:** That doesn’t happen very often.

**Jeff:** Yeah, usually there’s a riff or two that evolves.

**Christine:** And then the lyrics affect how the rest of the song fleshes out.

**Jeff:** I’d say most songs are already halfway in the bag by the time the lyrics come along.

**Christine:** Lyrics for me are the hardest.

**Sarah:** What about the song “Blue Cage?”

**David:** It’s funny. That song is the hardest one for me. I like it, but it’s a weird song.

**Annie:** Like, physically hard to play? Or...

**David:** Maybe for Jeff more than me, but... it’s just a tough nut, you know?

**Annie:** Is it like 7/17 timing or something?

**Jeff:** No, but it’s a four-minute song where I’m playing very, very fast on the high-hat.

**David:** Well, this is going to sound absurdly pretentious, but you know how...

**Annie:** It’s okay. You already mentioned earlier that you are a nerd.

**David:** Yeah, you know how painters will struggle with a painting for a year, and it’s still not what they want it to be? “Blue Cage” has that quality to me. Even though it was a jointly written song, it feels like it’s right but also wrong. It could be a good thing that element of tension in the song makes it sound awkward.

**Sarah:** That’s why I like it.

**David:** It makes me feel tense to listen to it.

**Annie:** I think those feelings are kind of common. Maybe later, you’ll find that missing part and we’ll get to hear a second version of it down the line.

**David:** But the lyrics are funny because

they’re about some neighbors of ours. One of them is no longer alive, which kind of changes my relationship to the song. It’s about a mother and daughter, both elderly and physically disabled, who lived across the street from us. My point of view on their relationship and circumstances have changed a little bit since we wrote the song, so I hope that she doesn’t ever have some way of finding out about that song and get offended.

**Sarah:** Okay, next question. David, you are one of the more... ahem... responsible persons in the Chicago scene. You have a van, all the equipment, the PA. Do you ever feel undue pressure, under the weight of the punk scene, to take care of stuff?

**Annie:** There really are just a few people who are considered “responsible.” I think Bryan and Sarah are definitely in there.

**Sarah:** I don’t know about Bryan (Sarah’s husband, guitarist in Annie’s band Manipulation, and driver of the van in front of us), but...

**Annie:** ...at least in our band, he is the responsible one. [We giggle at Bryan]

**Annie:** David, do you ever just want to cut loose and get wasted, let someone else drive the van, and deal with shit?

**David:** [long pause] Sometimes. I won’t deny not having thought about it.

**Christine:** Especially the driving part.

**David:** I kind of like driving, but the feeling was a lot worse about six or seven years ago. I’ve always been kind of a gearhead nerd about stuff. I’d buy way too much equipment, too many crappy guitars, because I enjoy...

**Sarah:** Tinkering?

**David:** Yeah. Trying to fix them up, playing them. I’ve bought a lot of gear, sold a lot of gear, and traded a lot of gear. I’ve gotten a lot for free through work. I’ll either use them or trade them.

**Annie:** You are the only person I know who has a lathe.

**Christine:** I’ve learned not to get too attached to gear because, sometimes, it won’t be around for very long.

**David:** I don’t mind loaning gear to shows...

**Annie:** Ooh, we should edit that out later, so word doesn’t get around.

**David:** I used to try and offer PA services for DIY shows. It was always a little bit awkward, especially when there wasn’t a lot of money being made, to ask for money, even though I had made it clear that I was doing that for money. There was always that fussy line between business and friendship. It was just easier to just not do it, except if people asked. And sometimes they do, and I’m always willing to loan equipment if needed and possible.

**Annie:** There’s a real sensitive line between punk and money. Like, if you are making money through punk rock, there must be a bad connection somewhere...

**David:** Yeah. The punk scene loves to hate those people who start punk businesses and actually keep at them to try and make a living. Marie Kanger-Born (locally-famed punk rock photographer) had a really interesting insight about that in the *MRR* interview. She said you could be anti-capital and anti-exploitation and still run a business to make a living for yourself. Be fair, charge a fair rate for what you do, and don’t try to pull the wool over peoples’ eyes.

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**N**oam Chomsky (born 1928) is best known for his theories in linguistics and acute social criticism. Chomsky first rose to prominence in the late '50s through his work in linguistics—notably his book *Syntactic Structures* and teaching position at MIT. However, as the Vietnam War progressed in the mid-1960s, Chomsky's political activism became more pronounced. Beginning with *American Power and the New Mandarins* in 1969 and on through today, Chomsky has relentlessly challenged abuses of power wherever he saw them. This includes but is not limited to the mass media's service to political and economic elites (see *Manufacturing Consent*), corporate greed (*Profit over People*), and the intelligentsia's assistance to power ("Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship"). Throughout the decades, Chomsky has remained consistent and his pace of publishing is nothing short of incredible. He has written about the oppressed and forgotten (covering the near-genocide of the people of East Timor and the plight of Palestinians), advocated for unions and the spread of working class literature (*Workers' Councils*), and given

countless lectures to audiences of varying sizes in numerous countries. Chomsky is also one of only a handful of academics to openly embrace anarchism. His work has influenced many activists committed to a better tomorrow. His humility has made him accessible to the smallest magazine (look no further than the rag you're holding).

At least some of Chomsky's political beliefs were influenced during his childhood by an uncle. Chomsky's uncle—who never finished the fourth grade, but was a highly erudite autodidact—ran a newsstand in the '30s that was a hotbed of political debate. In the throes of the Great Depression, a resurgence of left-wing activism occurred. Labor unions formed and Roosevelt passed The New Deal in an effort to rebuild America from wild Wall Street speculation gone south.

A precocious youth, Chomsky was immersed in this milieu; at ten years old, he wrote his first essay on the Spanish Anarchist movement. Later on, seeking a more egalitarian way of life, Chomsky and his wife Carol briefly lived in a kibbutz in the early '50s. They

returned to the States, where Chomsky's work in linguistics was met with great acclaim by academia. Nevertheless, even with the benefits that came with this success, Chomsky's commitment to human rights never diminished. When he spoke out against the Vietnam War, Chomsky realized he was risking his job. This prompted Carol Chomsky to go back to school to earn an advanced degree. Chomsky's belief in the ability of everyday people to transcend systems of oppression has been the bedrock of his political writing. His commitment to democracy has never abated, even in the face of great adversity.

For those new to Chomsky, *The Chomsky Reader* (edited by James Peck) provides a good overview of his work. Enhanced by an excellent introduction by the impressive Robert McChesney, *Profit over People* contains a succinct, biting criticism of multinational corporations. *Manufacturing Consent* remains one of the sharpest criticisms of mainstream media in print. *Chomsky on Anarchism*—as the name implies—explores the history of anarchism and Chomsky's views on it, through essays and collected interviews.

# NOAM CHOMSKY

Interview by Ryan Leach // Illustrations by Danny Martin // Layout by Lauren Measure

**Ryan Leach:** I'd like to talk with you about the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The act was pushed through Congress by the Bush administration. It forces states to administer tests to students to check for educational growth. At best, NCLB seems misguided. Teacher preparation courses advocate for a higher level of learning. For example, Bloom's Taxonomy of learning—which was a bedrock of the teaching program I attended—places rote knowledge at the bottom of the cognitive domain. Rote knowledge is exactly what these tests gauge. Why was this act implemented? What effects has it had on public education?

**Noam Chomsky:** I haven't done a careful study. Others have, though. It should have been anticipated that NCLB would have a negative effect on teaching if the purpose of teaching is to help children develop their sense of curiosity and independence of mind and help them explore topics of interest to them and so on. If the goal is to create automatons, then it's an effective program. I've heard plenty of horror stories from teachers, students and parents about

it. Just a couple of days ago a woman told me about her sixth-grade daughter. Her child was interested in a topic brought up in class. She asked the teacher if they could discuss it further; the teacher told her that they couldn't do it because they had to prepare for a test.

**Leach:** I worked as a teacher in a public elementary school. To me and many of the pedagogues I taught with, NCLB was the bane of our existence. Quite often we would have to rifle through subjects and quickly address facts that students needed to know for tests.

**Chomsky:** All of us who have been through school and college can remember occasions where we had to study to pass a test. You would study hard and pass the test. Three days later, you'd forget the material. That's because what you were learning did not relate to your own interests and concerns. It was just some mechanical thing you were doing to meet some outside condition.

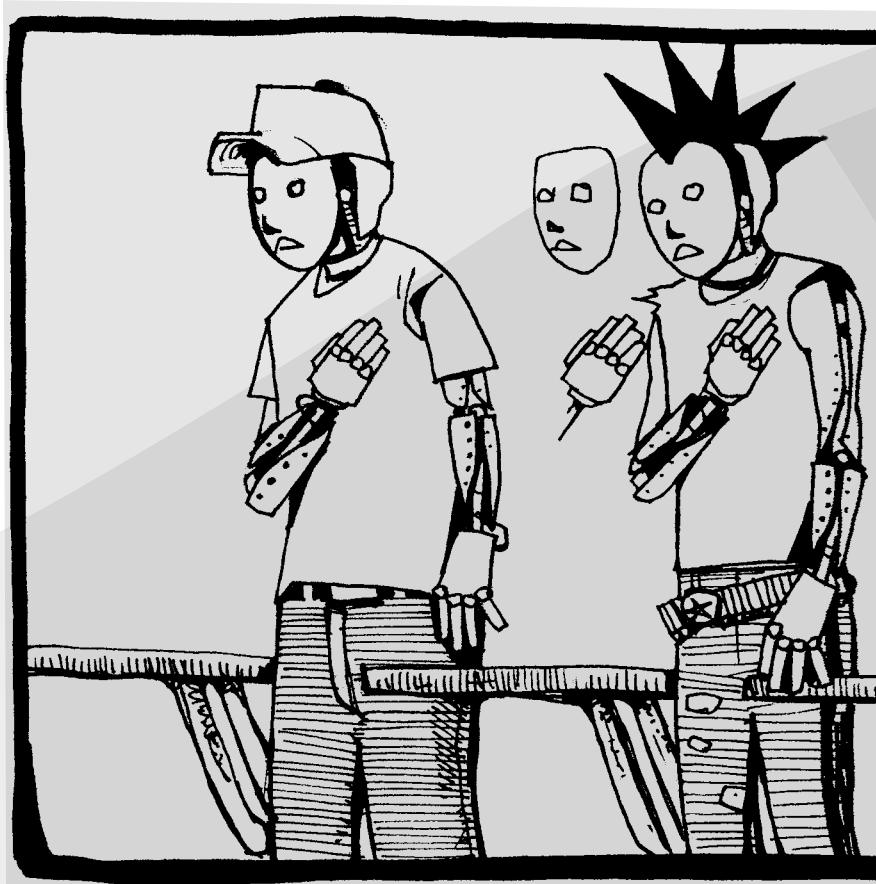
**Leach:** Labor unions have been under attack for some time now. You've written about Reagan's break up of an air traffic controllers union (PATCO) back in 1981,

which was a devastating blow to labor and a big triumph for private employers. While some of the benefits workers gain from labor unions are rather obvious—improved wages and living standards—there's another facet to them I'd like to discuss. That's the sense of cohesiveness and community they give to the working class and the educational opportunities they provide to workers—and I mean beyond simple workers' rights knowledge. It seems to me that many people my age—in their twenties—are no longer conscious of labor history and that's likely attributable to the numerous beatings labor unions have received over the decades.

**Chomsky:** Labor unions have always been under terrible attack. The United States has a very violent labor history, much more so than comparable countries. This goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There was a revival of the union movement in the 1930s. That's at the basis of the New Deal Reforms: social security, National Labor Relations Board, workers' rights acts, and many other developments that have improved life enormously for people. The source of these benefits was







labor militancy, the formation of the CIO, and so on.

And you're right: the unions were far more than protecting workers' rights. There were workers' education programs; there were developments of solidarity and support between workers. The primary reason why Canada has a national healthcare program—and the United States doesn't—is because Canadian unions were much more committed to obtaining benefits for the general society. They weren't solely looking out for their own constituents.

After the Second World War, there was a huge business attack on unions. A lot of business propaganda. It was visible in the cinema. It's been pretty well studied. And it has developed over the years. Reagan, as you mentioned, gave a major blow. It wasn't even the scabs which he allowed—they're a major attack on unions—they're not accepted in most of the world. What Reagan really did was he informed the business world that he wasn't going to enforce labor laws. For instance, there are laws against the illegal firing of union organizers. As the business press pointed out in the early '90s, the illegal firing of workers trying to organize tripled during the Reagan years. It went on from there.

This is a massive business offensive to try to undermine workers' rights, benefits, and other human rights. It's been pretty successful in the private sector. In the public

sector, it has been less successful because the laws are more readily upheld. But it's true: many people are no longer conscious of unions and their history. It's part of a general effort to create a culture of individual self interest without concern for others. It shows

attack on unions. *On the Waterfront* had a lot of resources behind it. *On the Waterfront* was a huge hit. *Salt of the Earth* just disappeared. There is scholarly work on this if you're interested. Again, that goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## NOAM CHOMSKY: IF THE GOAL IS TO CREATE AUTOMATONS, THEN IT'S AN EFFECTIVE PROGRAM.

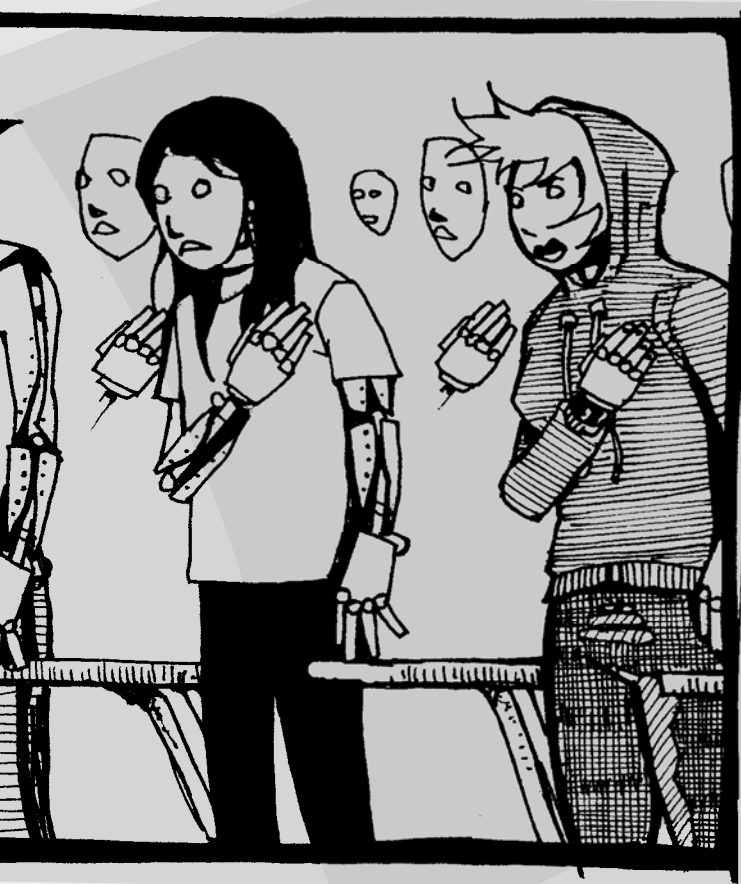
up in all sorts of ways.

**Leach:** In your writings, you occasionally reference Orwell. It's very striking how labor unions have simply vanished down the memory hole. It's not unheard of for private employers to be conspicuously hostile to unions in worker orientation exercises and videos.

**Chomsky:** All you get is the propaganda. You get no information about what was achieved. I remember back in 1953 two films came out. One was called *Salt of the Earth*. It's a film about a successful strike in New Mexico. It's a beautiful film that was extremely well done. At the same time, *On the Waterfront* came out with Marlon Brando. It was a big

**Leach:** I know you're an advocate of workers' councils. I really like Anton Pannekoek's *Workers' Councils*, too. Perhaps this is only interesting as a sidenote, but there was a time when Marxists who were anti-statist encouraged workers to transcend their unions. Pannekoek and Guy Debord encouraged workers to think beyond their unions. There was a major push in the May '68 uprising in Paris for workers to occupy their factories and overthrow their old unions. Unfortunately, workers never did get to transcend their labor unions. They were stolen from them, and the results have been detrimental to the working class, as you've mentioned.

**Chomsky:** It's true. But, on the other hand, there have been some successes in



developing worker-controlled cooperatives outside the capital union structure. There must be a couple of thousand worker-run small industries in the United States.

**Leach:** That's correct. On that note, you've written about the Spanish anarchist movement. You've covered it at length in an essay entitled "Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship." When people ask you questions concerning a more beneficial society to the one we live in now, you mention anarchism, workers' councils...

**Chomsky:** That's just a belief in democracy. **Leach:** And I agree with you. Outside of the Spanish anarchist movement of the '30s, you frequently reference the Israeli kibbutzim as an example. I haven't come across as much material from you on the latter example. Israel is obviously a very unique country for many reasons. What can people glean from the kibbutzim? I'm sure a lot of people in the United States are benighted to it. My knowledge of it is limited.

**Chomsky:** It has changed a lot over the years. In the early years, they were highly democratic communes in which people made decisions jointly on production and consumption. Common meetings were held and people shared ideas and goods. There were facilities for common mules, for care of children, and health care. They were quite successful. There were internal contradictions. They were part of a society

that existed and was based on the expulsion of the indigenous population. After 1967, it was a society that was geared toward occupation, aggression, illegal settlement, and so on. The kibbutz movement was affected by that. You can't extract it from the social system it was embedded in.

**Leach:** While we can't take the kibbutzim out of their context, can you go a little more in-depth as to how it transformed over the years? I imagine the increased privatization of goods and services were a factor.

**Chomsky:** For one thing, it's a pretty closed community. Young people wanted to go to the cities. The kibbutzim were mostly agriculture and small industries, located in rural areas. There were forces that sort of drew people out. Then there was also a move toward a more private life. The kibbutzim often had children houses for kids. Some families wanted their children to have their own room. Life became somewhat more privatized. They also had to function and compete with an outside economy. There were many factors that lead to changes in the kibbutzim. They are still highly cooperative and have high levels of solidarity by the standards of most of the world. But it's not like it was fifty years ago.

**Leach:** The Spanish anarchists were met with derision. They were overthrown and even repressed by the country's communist party. The kibbutzim, on the other hand,

seems to be a sense of pride for Israel. You see photos of Golda Meir (the fourth Prime Minister of Israel) working in the fields. Can a community based on these principles function in a capitalist society?

**Chomsky:** Israel was founded by pioneers—many of whom came from the kibbutz movement. There was kind of a compact between the kibbutz movement and the State. The State did tolerate the kibbutz movement. In turn, the kibbutz movement provided the elite fighting forces for the State—paratroopers and generals. So for a young kibbutz kid, the greatest ideal was to become a paratrooper. If you look at the list of generals, at least in the early years, many of them came out of the kibbutz movement.

**Leach:** There are many people in the United States who view the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as outright invasions and nefarious. However, and with good intentions, some of these same people suggest that an immediate withdrawal from the two countries would be a disaster. It would lead to civil war and increased bloodshed. What's your take on this line of thought?

**Chomsky:** That's maybe the view of some people here. It's not the view of the Iraqis. In fact, the exit strategy was forced on the United States by Iraqi opinion. There have been a ton of polls conducted by the United States. They've found that the Iraqis overwhelmingly blame the United States for





the sectarian violence and the collapse of the society. The Iraqis want U.S. troops out of their country. The Bush administration was compelled against its will to accept a status of forces agreement, which called for the total withdrawal of U.S. forces and for the abandonment of the many military bases that the U.S. has built all over Iraq. All of this was attributable to the Iraqis. The U.S. was opposed to it.

Afghanistan is such a disorganized society. It's really up to Afghans. President Karzai has called for a withdrawal date for coalition forces, which is mainly U.S. forces. There are some mixed feelings among Afghans. It's extremely hard to judge from polls taken in Afghanistan. It's hard to take polls under the conditions found in Afghanistan—to understand and interpret them. But I think it's pretty clear from the Western-run polls that most Afghans believe that they can sort their problems out by themselves and return to a significant course of development they had begun prior to the foreign invasions which started in the '70s and continues till today.

The Taliban is extremely unpopular, but so are the warlords who are supported by the United States government. In fact, many Afghans feel themselves caught between brutal forces. The Taliban is sort of a medieval Islamist force. The warlords have torn the country to shreds. They're, essentially, the Afghan government. And then there are the foreign troops.

What's the best outcome for this? The best outcome would be for the Afghans to work this

out for themselves as best as possible. There's no doubt that they want outside intervention, but they want it for reconstruction—aid, schools, hospitals, and so on.

**Leach:** You mention in *Perilous Power* that the best outcome would be to have an uninterested third party come in and help Afghans sort out their problems and aid in reconstruction work.

United States, as opposed to the destruction it unleashed on Vietnam?

**Chomsky:** In the case of Vietnam, the United States was primarily concerned with the possibility that the country might experience successful independent development. This is all in the early records of the war. The United States felt Vietnam would start a domino effect. It was sometimes called a virus effect,

**EVEN THE MOST TOTALITARIAN STATE HAS TO PAY ATTENTION TO POPULAR OPINION. THAT'S CERTAINLY TRUE IN A MORE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY.**

**Chomsky:** Unfortunately, that's not in the cards. There's a lot of maneuvering going on right now. Just a few days ago, Obama made a quick trip to Afghanistan. That was mostly to counter moves that the Afghan government has been making towards accommodation with Iran and China. Of course, the United States does not like this.

**Leach:** Commentators occasionally make parallels between the current war in Iraq and the American Vietnam War. Vietnam was totally destroyed by the United States. Why is leaving Iraq intact a major concern to the

meaning Vietnam would spread contagion to others. Other countries might try to follow Vietnam's path. And that might lead to the erosion of the United States' dominance of the entire region. There were concerns that it'd spread to Indonesia, a country with rich resources. The United States was concerned that Indonesia would pursue an independent path. That might then lead Japan to accommodate the whole region. Japan was called the "Super Domino" by leading Asian historian John Dower. Of course, the United States did not want that. It, essentially, would reconstruct the Japanese system the United



States fought the Second World War to block. Japan is a central technological and economic center. So, therefore, Vietnam simply had to be destroyed. Vietnam in itself had no particular strategic or economic interests to the United States.

Iraq is entirely different. Iraq probably has the second largest oil reserves in the world—petroleum hydrocarbon reserves. It's right in the center of the world's major energy-producing region. It's a really valuable asset. The goal was to conquer Iraq, turn it into a client state, and privilege U.S. investors with its resources. In fact, as late as January 2008, that was the official U.S. position. They had to back off on all of that. Very reluctantly, the Bush administration had to permit democratic practices. The U.S. fought against them every step of the way. There was just massive non-violent resistance.

The U.S. couldn't deal with it, so elections were held. They even had to allow people they didn't like to participate in the elections. The U.S. had to accept withdrawal and the status of forces agreement that I mentioned earlier. But they also had to give up on the goal announced as late as January 2008 to insure an energy regime that would favor U.S. investors. And, in fact, U.S. investors are not doing particularly well in the competition.

So, that was a totally different story than Vietnam. There's also a stronger opposition to aggression in the United States than there was in the 1960s. When Kennedy invaded

South Vietnam outright in 1962, there was almost no protest. You could hardly gather enough people in a living room to talk about it. In the case of Iraq, there were massive protests before the war was even launched, and that imposed restrictions on the possible use of force and violence.

**Leach:** You've mentioned popular resistance. I don't want to draw the analogy too close—I don't know how apt it is—but Nixon ran on a peace platform. Obama did the same. You've mentioned that in terms of foreign policy, there's little difference between the Republicans and the Democrats. Do you see Obama's peace platform as mere rhetoric?

**Chomsky:** The basic policies of the two parties tend to be similar. There are tactical differences. There are different choices made because of changing circumstances. One circumstance that no government can overlook is the state of internal opinion. That was even true in Nazi Germany. The Nazis had to fight what we call a "guns and butter" war. That means that the Nazis couldn't solely dedicate themselves to the war effort because they couldn't trust the population. Even the most totalitarian state has to pay attention to popular opinion. That's certainly true in a more democratic society.

**Leach:** You offer opinions and views that are not present in mainstream media. I'd like to hear your ideas on how Americans can help Afghans and Iraqis reach some sense of normalcy and improve their conditions of living.

**Chomsky:** If we were honest—if we could rise to this moral level—we would not be providing them with aid. We would not be providing them with reparations. Take Iraq. The United States has practically destroyed the country. They didn't start with the invasion. The Reagan administration strongly supported Saddam Hussein. They supported him so strongly that they denied his major atrocities. The U.S. backed him right through the war with Iran; they pretty much had run the war for him. After the war with Iran was over, the first Bush administration invited Iraqi nuclear engineers to the United States for advanced training in weapons production. That was 1989. Everyone wants to forget it now.

Then the sanctions against Iraq followed. They were murderous. We have plenty of evidence about them. There were respected, international diplomats who administered the sanctions—Denis Halliday and later Hans von Sponeck. They had investigators traveling around Iraq, gathering information. Halliday and Sponeck both resigned on grounds that the sanctions were genocidal. Halliday estimated that 1,000,000 people were killed during the Clinton years alone. Then comes the invasion, which probably killed hundreds of thousands, drove several million into exile. Baghdad was torn to shreds. The invasion set off sectarian violence which turned out to be bloody and brutal. The Iraqis are somehow trying to put something together out of all of this wreckage. We should really be providing



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DEFENDING THE FAITHLESS SINCE 1989

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them massive reparations in order for them to rebuild. The same with Afghanistan. The Russians should be paying reparations, too, for their atrocities in the 1980s. That would be the right thing to do. Of course, it's not in the cards.

**Leach:** You've mentioned the World Court (the primary judicial organ of the United Nations) ruling in the '80s that stated the United States owed Nicaragua reparations for the former's support of the Contras. The U.S. simply ignored this ruling.

**Chomsky:** The U.S. just dismissed the judgment and went on escalating the war.

**Leach:** You've stated in the past that lifting the sanctions could've been enough to topple Saddam Hussein.

statement from Peter Jay's interview is pretty powerful. Yet people seem really atomized right now. You've been writing about social and political issues for many decades. While I'm not asking you to make grand judgments, can you describe some paths developing in the United States currently and where these roads might take us in the near future?

**Chomsky:** People are very atomized right now. They're also very angry. There's tremendous anger in the country right now worse than anything I can remember or know about in history. About half the population thinks every member of Congress should be thrown out, including their own representatives. Distrust in institutions has probably reached historic heights. And that's not just governmental

There are a lot of left activists everywhere, but they're atomized. Very scattered. The kind of organization that is taking place, that is very real, is incredibly self-destructive and ominous. There are shades of late Weimar Republic. I'm not going to say history is going to repeat, but you can't miss some similarities. People who are organizing now—say to attack government programs—they're harming themselves. The government programs are the only things that preserve them from unaccountable private tyrannies.

Business propaganda is very nuanced. Look at how the Reagan myth has been created. Reagan has been anointed the apostle of free markets. He was the most protectionist president in post-War American

## PEOPLE ARE VERY ATOMIZED RIGHT NOW. THEY'RE ALSO VERY ANGRY. THERE'S TREMENDOUS ANGER IN THE COUNTRY RIGHT NOW WORSE THAN ANYTHING I CAN REMEMBER OR KNOW ABOUT IN HISTORY.

**Chomsky:** That's the opinion of the people who knew Iraq best. The Westerners who knew Iraq best were surely the directors of the so-called Oil for Food Program. That's Denis Halliday and Hans von Sponeck. Their opinion was that the sanctions were devastating the civilian society and strengthening the tyrant—compelling the people of Iraq to rely on Saddam Hussein for survival. He had a pretty efficient food distribution program which he rationed. It probably protected him from being overthrown from within. So many other gangsters like him were overthrown from within. (Romanian dictator) Nicolae Ceaușescu—the worst of the East European dictators—was a U.S. and British favorite. He was overthrown from within (December 1989); same with (Indonesian dictator) Suharto (May 1998) and (Philippine dictator) Ferdinand Marcos (February 1986); and a long series of others. The U.S. backed them right to the end, but they were overthrown. That very well could have happened with Saddam Hussein.

**Leach:** In an interview with Peter Jay from the late '70s, you state: "Now it seems to me that the development towards state totalitarianism and economic concentration—and of course they are linked—will continually lead to revulsion, to efforts of personal liberation and to organizational efforts at social liberation." We've talked about labor unions being in decline. In *Perilous Power*, you discuss people moving towards conservatism in the United States—I mean religious conservatism, not fiscal conservatism. You reference Thomas Frank's excellent book, *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, which tackles this issue. Your

institutions but also corporations, courts, and just about anything. There's tremendous anger and good reasons for it.

Take a look at the economy. In the early post-war years, there was a period of very rapid and successful economic growth. This happened in the 1950s and '60s. It was very unique. Historically, there was nothing like it over such a period of time. It was also egalitarian. If you take a look at the lowest quintile (fifth), it did about as well as the highest quintile. That changed in the 1970s. In the 1970s, the economy shifted considerably. There was a move towards the financialization of the economy and a corresponding hollowing out of productive enterprise. If you go back to, say, the 1970s, probably only a few percent of corporate profits were derived from financial institutions. Now it's close to a third. And productive industry was shifted abroad—Mexico, China, and so on. The neoliberal policies were also introduced, primarily, by Reagan and Clinton. It continues.

There are effects to all of this. For the majority of the population, incomes have stagnated over the past thirty years. And that's in the midst of plenty of wealth accumulation that's going into very few pockets; so inequality is maybe at its highest level since the end of slavery. If you look at social indicators—measures of the health of a society—they have declined severely since the mid-'70s. All of this affects people's lives. They might not understand all of the factors involved, but they react. They react with anger. They want an explanation. They want some way to deal with it.

history. He's supposed to be the prophet of small government. The government grew under his terms.

What's going on now is amazing propaganda achievements. With regard to government, business propaganda—which means media and everything else—is quite nuanced. They want people to hate the government. If they do, that means business has more power. On the other hand, they want people to love the government because they want a powerful state—one that works in their interest. You see it very well by just taking a look at the deficit. People are supposed to be very upset about it—the government is out of control and so on. And business pushes that. They want cutbacks on social programs. On the other hand, they want people to love the deficit. About half the deficit comes from military spending.

The rest are overwhelmed by the extremely high expenses of our privatized medical system which has twice the per capita cost as other countries. That's going to swamp the budget pretty soon. So what you're going to have with the deficit is military spending and the privatized health care system. Well, business is in favor of both of those so, therefore, you have to favor the deficit, but, at the same time, be terrified of it. That's a complicated propaganda task. But it is kind of working if you follow talk radio, the Tea Party movement, and Fox News.





# MADRID'S DREAMING

## THE FILMS OF PEDRO ALMODÓVAR

It was around 1990 when I first heard the name **Pedro Almodóvar**. Most of my social activity at the time involved getting together with people and watching videos. It was a time of awakening that a lot of movie nerds idealize: a period of discovering that movies are good for reasons other than making you laugh or allowing you to see explosions from a safe distance. Often, a cache of movies lingers from this time period. Two films I was exposed to early on by a friend were both by Spanish film director Pedro Almodóvar. *Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down* (1990) and *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (1988) influenced me heavily as a burgeoning fan of film. These two films were largely responsible for bringing his vision to the attention of the world. They are among his first widely distributed in the United States, or at least distributed widely enough to catch the attention of someone like me who, at the time, had only a peripheral knowledge of filmmaking outside of Hollywood.

WORDS: Billups Allen • ILLUSTRATIONS: Amy Shapiro • DESIGN: Brendan W. Cosgrove

The films portrayed Madrid as a paradise for eccentrics. Almodóvar movies are simultaneously an exploration and cannibalism of genre, produced with a D.I.Y. ethos and a strong grasp of behavioral anarchy among the characters. Even as his style continues to progress and become more mature, there is still a sense of mayhem to his storytelling that flouts the standards of convention.

In interviews, the director is consistently vague about elements of his films echoing events in his life. His known biographical timeline seeps through his narratives. However, it is apparent through examination of his interviews and essays that the director is decisively enigmatic. It is difficult to tell where the biographical information in his stories ends and where his real life begins. He consistently maintains that his films are mostly fictional. This denial is somewhat confirmed by the bizarre nature of his stories. Direct links between his life and his movies are sometimes present and apparent in his movies, but the significance of any known details can be lost in the realm of broad facts and crazy plot lines. He has stated in numerous interviews that he

hopes no one will ever write his biography. I found that out after reading too many interviews to give this up, so please keep the following to yourself.

### Early Years

Pedro Almodóvar was born in Calzada de Calatrava, Spain on September 25, 1949. Calzada de Calatrava lies in the providence of Ciudad Real. The land of Don Quixote, Ciudad Real is a rural community that, at the time of Almodóvar's childhood, did not have a movie theater. He was around eight years old when he was sent to a larger township called Cáceres to study at a Catholic school. Coming from a small township, he had been exposed to a few movies, but there was an important difference between Calzada de Calatrava and Cáceres: Cáceres had its own cinema. It was within the confines of a dark theater where he spent much of his free time. Almodóvar's education on the screen began to trump the education he was receiving in his proper classes. Like most artistic types living in rural towns, he clung to available culture. That culture included movies, books, and pulp magazines. He was exposed to Hollywood directors such

as Blake Edwards and Billy Wilder and French New Wave directors such as Truffaut and Godard. The Italian neo-realist films of Visconti and Antonioni resounded strongly with him as well, especially their use of location shooting and their focus on class issues, which came to be a prevalent theme in many of his films.

Shying away from his religious studies, Almodóvar remained in Catholic school until he was sixteen. Much to his family's dismay, he moved to Madrid in 1967. He intended to pursue an education at the National School of Cinema, but Spain was firmly under the rule of the dictator Francisco Franco at the time. Franco permitted a shallow range of culture to be explored under his reign. Choices in personal expression were relegated almost exclusively to bullfighting and Flamenco dancing. In an attempt to thwart criticism through filmmaking, Franco had Spain's National School of Cinema shut down.

Franco's penchant for controlling the citizenry was not casual. Violent police forces were dispatched to patrol in both the cities and the rural areas. Strict Catholic policies were not implied; they were part of the edict of the law.



Student protests were dealt with violently. Massive graves containing the bodies of those who upset the regime served as reminders of the consequences of questionable behavior. There were few avenues available to those who wished to explore the arts and little motivation to speak out publicly.

As in many oppressive societies, underground clubs of writers and artists formed. This became somewhat less of a liability in the early seventies, particularly towards the end of Franco's life. As Franco's attention turned towards the dynamic in his inner circle, his control over the day-to-day activities of the citizens loosened in the cities. Caesarian politics would begin to attract Franco's attention, particularly in regards to naming his successor. Whatever freedom there was to be creative due to the subsiding oppression in the country, Almodovar appears to have taken advantage of it. He published writing and drawings in underground magazines, sang in a band, and worked on and off with a theater group.

After the death of Francisco Franco in November 1975, a transition into democracy began almost immediately in the streets and nightclubs of Madrid. As Richard Nixon unwittingly declared Franco to be a "loyal friend and ally to the United States," the façade created by Franco's years of propaganda and coercion began to crumble on the world stage. The cruelty and conservative values enforced under his dictatorship were beginning to be exposed and, in congress with the designing of a democratic state, a period known as *La Movida Madrileña* (the movement) was beginning. A political transformation was at hand, and it was a period of awakening for artists and writers. Before 1975, culture as innocuous as *Playboy* magazine was treated as highly illegal contraband in Spain. Between 1976 and 1978, criminal laws outlawing pornography, homosexuality, contraception, abortion, and laws promoting the subjugation of women were systematically lifted in an attempt to create a democratic state and promote Spain's connection to the world for the sake of tourism. Artistic content in all mediums became more open as a clear, reactionary explosion of exiting decades of tyranny. A resurrection of the economy and artistic freedom brought on a new identity for Spain. A scene that would divest from the conservative norm was forming rapidly. Concurrent with an emerging art movement in America dealing with transgressive themes, *La Movida Madrileña* explored breaking the repressive standards Spanish society was steeped in.

Almodovar was active in the burgeoning scene and forged relationships with many like-minded members of the Spanish underground. Artists, actors, filmmakers, and musicians that would comprise Spain's approaching cultural explosion were congregating under the cover of Madrid's nightlife. It was here that Almodovar first met a band considered to be Spain's first punk band, Kaka de Luxe, a group fronted by a teenage girl known as Alaska—who would herself become an icon

in Spain's cultural awakening—and a play a significant role in his first film. He worked with an experimental theater group called Los Goliardos where he met Carmen Maura, an actress who would star in a number of his movies. Maura and Almodovar became close friends quickly and began working together on his 8mm films. Maura would become the anchor to a stable of actors and actresses who would appear regularly in many of his early films and a large portion of his middle ones.

### The First Two

For years, Almodovar maintained a regular day job at Telefonica (the Spanish telecommunication company). He saved money from his paychecks and bought an 8mm camera. Spain's film school had reopened, but Almodovar was settled in his job at this time and, like many underground filmmakers of his generation, became interested in using his 8mm camera to produce films. Almodovar's first 8mm films were produced to exhibit in nightclubs, artist gatherings, and 8mm film festivals. He was regularly producing silent films with titles that were as sexually driven as they were comedic, including *Two Prostitutes, Or History of Love That Finishes in Wedding* (1974); *Sex Goes, Sex Comes* (1977); and *Fuck Me, Fuck Me, Fuck Me, Tim* (1978).

A predominance of filmmakers were using 8mm as a tool for experimental film. Those who considered films that tell stories to be passé frequented 8mm festivals at the time. Almodovar used the medium early on for narrative stories and early attempts at genre dissection. While his films were sometimes seen as old fashioned by the festival crowds who were more interested in experimental filmmaking, his wild performances were becoming standbys in bars, nightclubs, and art galleries. 8mm cameras did not, for the most part, come equipped to record sound. To round out his silent film exhibitions, he would bring music on cassettes and speak the characters' dialogue himself using a variety of voices. He learned to feed off of the crowd's reactions to the humor in his wild narratives by adding elements such as phony commercials and movie trailers to his programs and criticizing actors during his narration.

Since his regular shift at Telefonica ended in the afternoons, Almodovar became a regular presence in the flowering creative climate of post-Franco Spain. Artistically, the stage was set for him to enter into making full-length films. He was enjoying good working relationships with actors, cultivating an interested audience, and was gaining proficiency with shooting. As with many

budding directors, a lack of money was the main issue holding him back from producing longer projects.

He and Carmen Maura had recorded some 8mm footage that would become the basis for his first full-length film to be shot on 16mm film. 16mm is an acceptable standard in professional filmmaking, but it is also more expensive. Almodovar completed his first film, *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, shooting while on leaves of absence from his job at Telefonica with a cast and crew of volunteers. His desire to create a more focused and extended story came about at a time when Los Goliardos was ready to work on a larger narrative.

*Pepi, Luci, Bom* was produced through this series of shooting sessions, causing the film to come across as more of a compilation of loosely connected vignettes than a fully formed feature. Nonetheless, Almodovar's strengths were apparent in the film. His extensive exploitation of vibrant colors, deep understanding of camp style, and use of sexually explicit themes were prevalent in *Pepi, Luci, Bom* and became core elements of his unique style of filmmaking.

Almodovar had, at some point, a roommate who kept marijuana plants on their shared balcony. This real life detail drives the opening of *Pepi, Luci, Bom*. A sleazy cop (Felix Rotarta) confronts a young girl named Pepi (Carmen Maura) about her growing marijuana on her balcony. Without much drama, Pepi offers to make a deal and exchange sex for the cop's promise to keep quiet about her window box plants. If you weren't paying attention, you could be tricked into thinking a porno was about to begin. Although the situation is inherently awful due to this insidious rape, Pepi is more upset because she wanted to sell her virginity. Almodovar's full-length film career begins with a scene that casts puzzling emotional light on the crime of rape. It wouldn't be the last time. Production of the film was halted several times due to financial considerations. Almodovar considered completing the film in the tradition of his 8mm films, by standing in front of the camera with music playing in the background and explaining what happened. After about eighteen months of on-and-off shooting, he prevailed, and *Pepi, Luci, Bom* was released in 1980, becoming his first full-length picture shot on 16mm film.

*Pepi, Luci, Bom* was well received by the midnight movie crowd. The film is not only among his most notorious, but perhaps is one of the largest monuments to bad taste since John Waters' *Pink Flamingos* was released in 1972. Besides playing for shock value, the movie opens a window into his style. The confused plot of the film is palpable, but his manipulation of complicated stories would improve quickly. The convoluted nature of some of his early work lays groundwork for pushing the envelope in some of his more

Like most artistic types living in rural towns, he clung to available culture

masterful labyrinths of storytelling. Although he maintains affection for straightforward Hollywood narratives and simple Italian Neo-realist stories, Almodovar rarely goes from A to B.

Almodovar's collaboration with Carmen Maura in *Pepi, Luci, Bom* would be the first of many in the 1980s. Julieta Serrano is another actress who would start with Almodovar's first film and continue to act in several of his productions. His years of working with an ensemble cast indicate he is an actor's director. Some are chosen by their abilities to exude a wide emotional range. Others are chosen for their spontaneity. Almodovar seems to have no qualms discussing their strengths and weaknesses in interviews, perhaps a throwback to his criticism during the 8mm days. While his discussion of performances comes across as good-natured, a thick skin would be a necessity for an Almodovar regular. Yet all seem to have a deep understanding of the director's dark sense of humor when they are on the screen. His inclination to return to the same stable of actors and actresses will serve him well throughout his films and culminate in the late 1980s with the screwball comedy *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*.

While still holding onto his job at Telefonica, Almodovar gained the attention of an established production company named Alphaville. Alphaville was impressed with the cult status that *Pepi, Luci, Bom* received on the late night movie circuit around Madrid, and, no doubt, by the fact that it did not lose money. Almodovar claims none of his movies have lost money, a statement few directors can echo. Of course, he did not spend much to create *Pepi, Luci, Bom*. Alphaville became the producers of his next film, *Labyrinth of Passion* (1982).

While Almodovar's unique storytelling often orbits around wild and taboo subjects, his development as an artist did not languish by relying solely on shock value. His exploration of calculatedly complicated plot lines began as early as his second film. While elements of the story include characters steeped in eccentric behaviors, *Labyrinth of Passion* deeply explores a standard practice of the director: genre cannibalism. Abiding his long-term interest in deconstructing established Hollywood narratives, *Labyrinth of Passion* recreates the tone and feel of a traditional Hollywood screwball comedy. In spite of his pattern of working regularly with the same actresses, *Labyrinth of Passion* deviates, recycling few of his original players from *Pepi, Luci, Bom*. It is, however, the first time Almodovar regular Antonio Banderas appears in one of his films. Banderas has a small role in *Labyrinth of Passion*, but his ability to radiate a diffusing of traditionally Spanish machismo values will come heavily into play in some of Almodovar's seminal work and become a jumping off point of Banderas's international stardom. The director's ability to manipulate multiple story lines matured quickly as he honed his skills of construction, but the most relevant



**Rossy de Palma: one among a unique stable of actors who started out in Almodovar films**



**Antonio Banderes goes shirts off in *Law of Desire* and Julieta Serrano gets strapped in *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*.**



window into his style exhibited by *Labyrinth of Passion* is his ability to take an established genre and make it his own.

Both *Pepi, Luci, Bom* and *Labyrinth of Passion* illustrate Almodovar's shaping of Madrid into a diegetic world of his own liking. Both films are occasionally muddled due to a maze of characters coming and going. Perhaps because of this, his next film would be among the more straightforward narratives of his career and would begin to unite the dream team responsible for his most internationally popular film. It would also see the end of his job at Telefonica.

### Tesauro Productions

Tesauro Productions was a film studio funded by multi-millionaire Herve Hachuel. Among other things, Hachuel was responsible for bringing Warhol to Madrid. Tesauro was a company clearly constructed in an attempt by Hachuel to keep his wife Cristina Sanchez Pascual interested in him. Pascual handled smaller roles in Almodovar's first two films, but Hachuel's new financial influence compelled Almodovar to increase Pascual's participation. Almodovar was initially reluctant to work under these circumstances, but he needed funding for his next film. *Dark Habits* (1983) was developed for Pascual from another story the director was sitting on. In such a heavily Catholic country, it is hard to imagine the story of a convent of nuns entering into the drug trade could be made at all. It would not be his last controversial film. *Dark Habits* was intended to be a story told primarily from the point of a lounge singer portrayed by Pascual. When her limited acting ability became a problem, Almodovar shifted the focus of the narrative on to the emerging roster of actresses that were mastering his dark sense of humor.

*Dark Habits* began to solidify the standard for excellent performances throughout his films and set the standard for actors and actresses who followed. Heavyweight players Julieta Serrano and Carmen Maura from *Pepi, Luci, and Bom* returned. *Dark Habits* also brought about the first appearance by Chus Lampreave, a unique actress whose pastoral characteristics fill a specific role in the family structure often prevalent in his films. Lampreave embodies the well-meaning busybody in a variety of roles including mothers, grandmothers, and landladies. The actress was forced to turn down offers for roles in *Pepi, Luci, Bom* and *Labyrinth of Passion* due to various eye surgeries, but the director's persistence led to a memorable role in *Dark Habits*. From there she would go on to have roles in more of his movies than any other performer besides his brother Agustin, who made regular cameos.

*Dark Habits* was initially rejected from the Cannes Film Festival due to its portrayal of nuns engaging in such devious acts as drug abuse. Almodovar maintains the film is not anti-clerical, yet even the freedom of post-Franco Spain could not quell reactionary attitudes towards drug-dealing

nuns. *Dark Habits* premiered at the Venice Film Festival where Italian critics were divided. It eventually made its way back to Spain to similarly mixed reviews. *Dark Habits* secured Almodovar's reputation as Spain's "enfant terrible," a term describing an unconventionally intelligent or candid child who acts out in unorthodox ways. His rebellious and sly manner of exposing Spain's cultural mores was causing some controversy. He was also catching Spain's ear.

*Dark Habits* is further exploration in genre dissection, melodrama being the main focus. His next film would continue in this vein. Even with Pascual out of the picture, Hachuel financed Almodovar's fourth film, *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* (1984). It was another exploration in melodrama with Carmen Maura at the helm. The film is set in low-income housing blocks similar to those the director would pass every day on his commute to work at Telefonica years earlier. The film explores the routine of Gloria (Carmen Maura), a housewife whose mounting injustices of everyday life become absurd in their oppressiveness. Although *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* is similar in tone to *Dark Habits*, it demonstrates a distinct maturing of his style. The film also explores the wide range of settings that will create a complex view of Madrid via Almodovar's lens, which continues throughout his career. Through his films, we see not only the nightlife and tourist spots, but also the more common areas like nunneries and block housing. Madrid becomes a palpable character throughout his body of work, a detail of the influence of the Italian Neo-realists that is most palpable in this film.

Moderate critical attention up to this point had been achieved in European film circles, but *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* began to break Almodovar into North America. The film was shown in Canada at the Montreal Film Festival and received positive reviews in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, and *The Village Voice*. Although *Dark Habits* and *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* exhibit strong development in his style and his ability to produce more cohesive work when receiving regular funding, Almodovar was learning that he was not content under the thumbs of producers. He aspired to gain financial independence. His next two films would bring him closer to that goal.

### **Matador (1986)**

Almodovar's fifth feature length film, *Matador*, was distributed internationally after his next film *Law of Desire* (1986). The film was co-produced in conjunction with

Andre Vincent Gomez's Iberoamericana Films and RTVE, Spanish State Television. The subsidies from the government film office comprised Almodovar's largest budget to date. Gomez believed in the strength of Spanish export and his relationship with Almodovar was well-timed for collaboration on the production of *Matador*. Spain's cultural identity was erratically changing. The initial wave of freedom was snowballing and

sedating conservative reactions towards taboo subject matter. Topics such as patriarchal dominance and sexual identity were becoming more acceptable to explore in Spanish art and media. Almodovar was among those becoming a sounding board for redefining

the landscape of art for the country.

In *Matador*, Almodovar begins to employ more abstract story devices. The opening credits are bright red and fill the screen with clips of Herschel Gordon Lewis-style gore movies on a television screen. A middle-aged man sits in a big yellow chair masturbating. The man masturbating to the extreme violence is Diego (Nacho Martinez), the matador. Angel (Antonio Banderas) is a student bullfighter under his tutelage. Angel and Diego discuss Angel's reluctance towards violence and the problems that it causes with his desire to become a bullfighter. Diego asks Angel, respectfully, if he has ever considered the possibility that he might be gay. Incensed, Angel attempts to rape Diego's girlfriend Eva Solder (Eva Cobo).

On paper, some of the coincidences employed in the film appear unrealistic, but in Almodovar's early works, Madrid is a small city where the rich and repressed are obliged to intermingle with the city's wilder eccentrics. The introduction of surrealistic elements such as psychic abilities and noir-style murder present new depth to the arsenal of his plot devices and intermingle nicely into the framework of *Matador*. While Almodovar's films are largely wild and anarchic up to this point, *Matador* induces a certain maturing in the director's realm of calculated fun. As the mystery of *Matador* is about to be solved, the entire cast stops to watch an eclipse. It is a strange scene—out of context with the rest of the movie—and a surreal version of the humor that had been prevalent in his earlier films. It is also an indicator of the more subtle brand of humor he would employ from here on. The diegetic world that has developed in his past films leaves less room to consider if there are holes that make the story unreasonable. The more complicated the plots become, the more the world created around the characters seems to make sense.

More new ground arising out of *Matador* is the development of a more complicated male character. Angel's inability to perform sexually leads to his confessing to crimes he did not commit in an attempt to exude his manhood. Angel as a commentary on the effects of machismo culture on masculinity is a step in the exploration of male sexuality that will continue throughout his films, including Banderas returning as a stalker in *Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down*; Javier Bardem as a paraplegic cop in *Live Flesh* (1997); and Rosario Flores as a female bullfighter in *Talk to Her* (2002).

Also prevalent in *Matador* is the further development of his distinct use of color. *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* stands out as having a particularly dour mise-en-scene. *Matador* is a sharp return to the world of bright colors. This dynamic is amplified by the increased budget. Aside from *What Have I Done to Deserve This?*, Almodovar's films are laden with primary colors. The urban decay portrayed regularly in his films is countered with reds and yellows in his sets and costumes. His films radiate heat due to his use of loud color schemes. Red dresses are a consistent prop in his films and walls are often bathed in bright paint. The ability of his characters to interact outside of the boundaries of class is reinforced by a melding of Madrid's culture through the use of these bright settings and costumes. Almodovar's Madrid is a vibrant place, a world where the lines of class acceptance are blurred, but not extracted.

Almodovar's relationship with Iberoamericana Films' Gomez did not last. In contrast to Hachuel's method of throwing money at his wife's career, Gomez had a production background and enthusiasm for the future of Spanish cinema breaking through to the world market. It sounded like a perfect situation for a working director to be involved in. But Gomez' attention was divided among an array of different projects, a situation that would ultimately frustrate Almodovar. Almodovar was learning what he needed to know: not only the craft of filmmaking, but also the business of international promotion and the minutiae of production. Rather than rally for producers' support, Pedro and his brother and longtime conspirator, Agustin Almodovar, decided to form their own production company.

### **El Deseo**

Pedro Almodovar's success up to this point was greatly indebted to his brother Agustin. Agustin acted as a sounding board and served as an extra in nearly all of Pedro's films. *Law of Desire* was written before *Matador* but was turning out to be one of Pedro's most difficult films to acquire funding for, due to its largely gay narrative. Agustin and Pedro used the modest earnings from Pedro's previous films and a large loan from the bank to form the production company



El Deseo (the desire) with the purpose of producing *Law of Desire*. Ironically, the attention that *Law of Desire* amassed in the gay community—and with critical acclaim in New York papers and European film festivals—paved the way for *Matador* to achieve wider distribution. Pedro and Agustín launched El Deseo's first feature film, *Law of Desire*, with a lot of pressure riding on their financial future.

Although Pedro Almodóvar is openly gay, gay issues generally appear as peripheral plot devices in his movies. *Law of Desire* is an exception in that it is only one of two films noticeably incorporated in what would be considered the canon of gay cinema. The compelling story of three men in a love triangle is an interesting revision on gay narratives, as the story is presented with the gender of the characters having little bearing on the story. A love triangle is played out in a standard Hollywood format, including the first hint of Hitchcock-style intrigue. In the period following an insulting modern portrait of homosexuals in *Cruising* (1980), a new canon of gay cinema was forming. Along with the English film *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and the American film *Parting Glances* (1986), *Law of Desire* dealt with the particulars of a relationship between men at a time when positive portrayals of homosexuals were not as prevalent. It was also a straightforward thriller. Although Almodóvar persists with an inclination to withdraw from labels involving niche cinema, the director has had a hand in presenting some of the most confident and liberated gay characters visible in film.

*Law of Desire* is also the beginning of his exploring Hitchcock thrillers more directly. A strong exploration of identity and themes of mistaken identity resound with classic Hitchcock narratives such as *Strangers on a Train* (1951) and *Rear Window* (1954). His exploration of murder and intrigue will continue throughout his mid-to-late work, including his most recent film, *Broken Embraces* (2009).

Agustín and Pedro's financial gamble paid off. *Law of Desire* was a success and helped cement the company's future. Almodóvar was enjoying a new level of success. The forming of El Deseo would prove to be a further freeing of an already wildly original filmmaker. After *Law of Desire* gained some momentum abroad, *Matador* followed quickly. This one-two punch fated Almodóvar's style to reach wider audiences abroad. No longer dependent on outside forces, Pedro was free to direct without compromising to pressure from an established studio or conforming to standards set by public funds. As producers, Pedro and Agustín were becoming self-reliant.

El Deseo appears to have been a prudent investment. It flourishes today as the home of the

Almodóvar brand and has been active in many co-productions with French companies. Worldwide success was about to peak with his next film as his most developed strengths were fused into a watershed project. *Women on the Verge*

**PEPI, LUCI, BOM is one of the largest monuments to bad taste since John Waters' PINK FLAMINGOS was released in 1972**

of a Nervous Breakdown reunites his most honed stable of players and refocuses his tested knowledge of screwball comedy to produce a film that changed the game for him around the world.

### ***Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown***

Although some of his earlier films were getting modest attention in film circles, the timing of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* increased the director's visibility considerably. The film presented a more digestible commentary on sex and murder than *Matador* and *Law of Desire* and elevated Almodóvar to a new level of mainstream success in the arena of foreign films in North America. While his previous two films garnered exponentially improved attention from the American and European press, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* brought Almodóvar considerable accolades. The film was nominated for an Academy Award and a Golden Globe for best foreign language film. It won several European Film Awards and was chosen Best Foreign Language Film by the National Board of Review and by the New York Film Critics association and won best screenplay at the Venice Film Festival. Almodóvar was becoming an international icon. His films began attracting larger audiences around the world and his style was becoming recognized as distinct.

Dumped by her long-term lover Ivan (Fernando Guillén), Pepa (Carmen Maura) decides to rent her apartment out to escape her memories of their long affair. As more and more characters converge on the apartment, much of the chaos of the plot is driven by a pot of spiked gazpacho. The story culminates in another mad dash to the airport, a scenario similar to the one in *Labyrinth of Passion* and another example of a Hollywood standard applied in his films. This time, the cast attempts to get to the airport in time to stop Lucia from killing Ivan.

Almodóvar pulled away from the successful formula that made *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* an international success and moved on to a story that would bring his version of controversy to America, due to its bizarre premise and stark sexual content. *Matador* presents a confused correlation between sex and death that *Women on the Verge of a Nervous*

*Breakdown* would streamline. His next film, *Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down*, (1990) would undo the levity that American audiences connected with, starting with the film's subject matter receiving an X rating by the Motion Picture Association of America.

### **Crossing the Motion Picture Association of America**

More attention meant more controversy. Spain's initial cultural awakening after Franco's death was becoming old news in Madrid and the words "un film de Almodóvar" emblazoned on the screen in bright red letters was beginning to have clout on the international market. As his profile increased, so did the scrutiny of his black style of humor. *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* introduced the director to a wider audience, but this wider audience had not been exposed to the full range of Almodóvar's exploration into themes of depravity. 1990's *Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down!* proved to be a rude introduction to the American standards of censorship. In the film, Ricky (Antonio Banderas) is released from a mental institution. Fixated on Marina (Victoria Abril), Ricky seeks her out and detains her in her apartment, convinced he can make her love him.

The Motion Picture Association of America, responsible for movie ratings in America, branded *Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down!* with an X rating. The board of the MPAA is a privately run organization devoid of responsibility to the filmmakers whose films they rate. An X on a film means that the film will not be rated due to extreme content and distributors will not carry the film for wide release.

Almodóvar appealed the X rating attached to his film, echoing appeals being made at the time by Peter Greenaway for his film *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* and John McNaughton's film *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*. All three directors lost their appeals and released their films unrated in America. Releasing a film unrated can be problematic for a film's distribution, especially for a foreign language film, as there is a smaller audience willing to read subtitles. An X rating scares most major distributors as it is generally associated with pornography. An X rated film, pornographic or not, will only be exhibited in small, privately run theaters that are not dependent solely on these major distributors.

*Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down!* suffered a bit in America, but it maintained a respectable run due to an increasingly receptive climate for foreign and independent films. Smaller distributors and art house cinemas began having a larger role in exhibiting foreign and independent films. The controversy of appealing the X rating also helped these films gain moderate attention. In spite of the MPAA's determination to keep these films out of theaters due to sexually explicit material, Almodóvar's career maintained an international upswing. The controversy

surrounding this film exposed the world to the side of the director that earned him the nickname “enfant terrible” in Spain.

In the scope of the bulk of his work, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* could be considered tame by comparison, especially compared to a film like *Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down!* which, unwittingly, gives hope to stalkers. A backlash to Almodovar’s brand of anarchy was eminent due primarily to a graphic love scene between the main characters. Feminist groups criticized *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* for inherently containing degrading acts towards women in its premise. Comedy is a factor in *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!*, but Almodovar’s freewheeling anarchy peaks in *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* and fades distinctly as his films begin to regularly express a more solemn tone.

### Maturing with His Characters

Characters in Almodovar movies appear to age in congress with what one would expect of those exposed to the early artistic movements and excessive personal freedoms who are the subjects of his early work. His characters make the switch from being in punk and new wave bands to being lounge singers and legendary singers of boleros—the bolero being considered somewhat passé and corny in Spanish culture. These songs are used to evoke a certain sentimentality and create a certain level of camp in his movies, much in the way John Waters uses ‘50s pop music to present Baltimore as a land infused with nostalgia.

Having spent much of his time in the pursuit of making films, Almodovar turned heavily towards meta-narrative story elements. Many of the films throughout his career contain characters in various occupations in film production. This dynamic escalates as the stories begin to revolve around screenwriters and directors in transitional stages of their careers. Although there are still few concrete insights into his personal life, Almodovar’s characters grow with him. Madrid through his eyes relies heavily on the point of view of people in the entertainment industry. His characters are singers, aging actors, frustrated writers, stagnating drag queens, and a host of eccentrics who further explore the depths and peaks of the creative process beyond the years of angst his earlier characters embody.

His maturing at this point created a temporary rift with his American audience. The splintering of underground culture and the return of conservative values caused the release of an Almodovar film to be less of an event in America than it had previously been. While *High Heels* (1991) seems to have garnered minor attention on the heels of *Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down!*, the film suffered at the hands of Spanish and American critics attacking the film on similar moral grounds. Almodovar’s legacy as an underground figure was in some transition. His next three films would enter and exit American theaters



The director and his eye on the world.





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# PEDRO ALMODOVAR

cont'd

without much notice. *Kika* (1993), *The Flower of My Secret* (1995), and *Live Flesh* suffered in the hands of mainstream distributors as well as in the mainstream press. At the mercy of an audience that is disinclined to see foreign language films, the unorthodox story lines did not resonate with mainstream audiences. His limited runs in large theaters also kept him under the radar of the underground writers and patrons who had elevated his career outside of Spain.

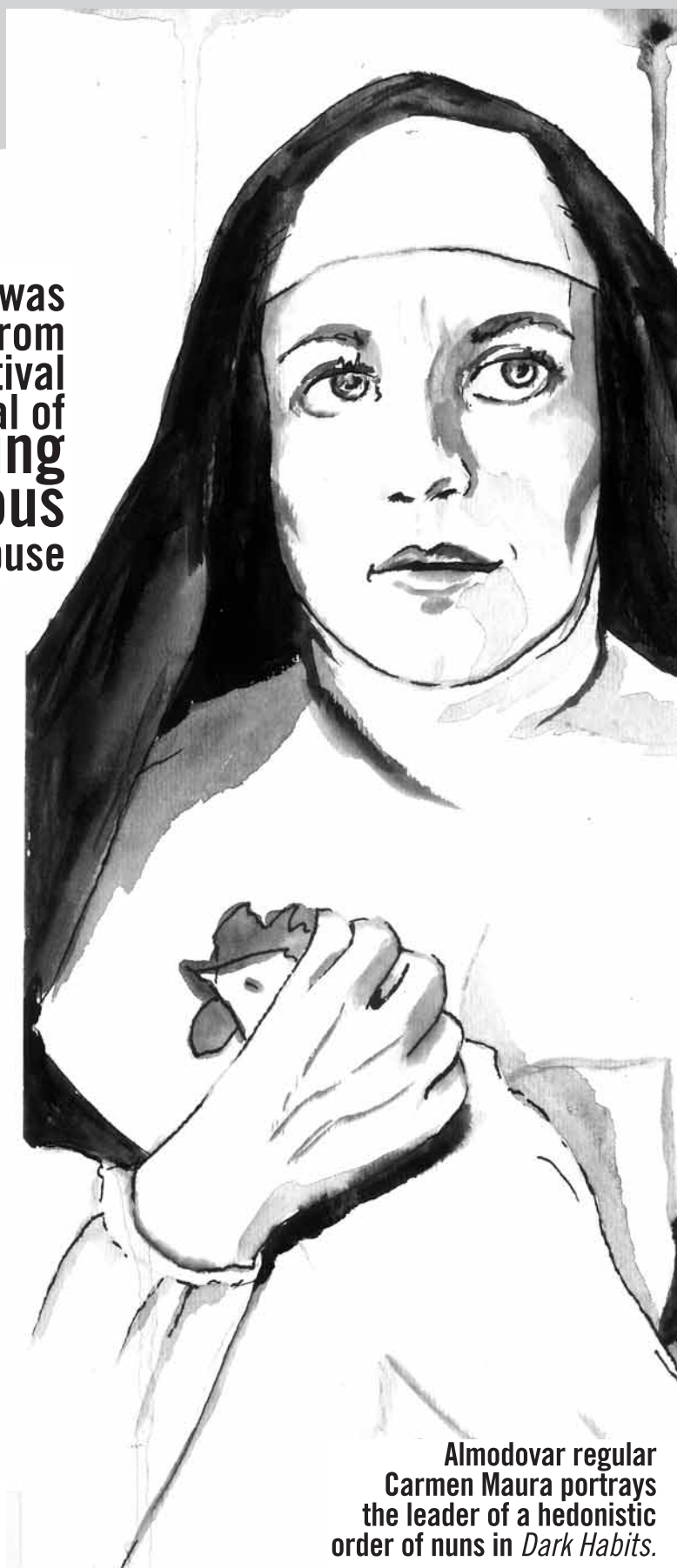
***DARK HABITS* was initially rejected from Cannes Film Festival due to its portrayal of nuns engaging in such devious acts as drug abuse**

## **Almodovar's Next Two Films Dive Deeper into the Realm of Dissected Melodrama**

*All about My Mother* (1999) focuses on the relationships of a group of women assembled by circumstance, but clearly united in the drama of life. Abandoning the mystery narrative, *All about My Mother* explores the darker side of the camp inherent in his movies and comes across as perhaps a more serious version of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*. As Almodovar often references the world he has created within his films, a transgender character named Agrado dresses in a phony red Chanel suit as a parody of Victoria Abril's character in *High Heels*. *All about My Mother* brought American audiences back, amassed his largest list of awards thus far, and received much praise from critics.

*Talk to Her* begins another short phase of refocusing on male characters. Benigno (Javier Camara) is a nurse who specializes in coma patients. He is in charge of Alicia (Leonor Watling) and falls in love with her despite her being unconscious. A female bullfighter named Lydia (Rosario Flores) ends up in his ward. Benigno befriends Lydia's boyfriend Marco (Dario Grandinetti). Marco is abstractly dumped by his girlfriend in a coma, bringing the two men closer together; another example of Almodovar's bizarre sense of humor bleeding through in his more mature work.

*All about My Mother* and *Talk to Her* result in a resurgence in attention to his films, Oscar nods, and various award nominations including Cannes, Golden Globes, and various critics associations. The upswing of attention these two movies grabbed seemed to anchor the filmmaker back into a realm of success that surpassed *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*. In the same—almost sabotaging—manner as *Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down*, *Bad Education* (2004) temporarily derailed the upswing the director experienced after *Talk to Her*.



**Almodovar regular Carmen Maura portrays the leader of a hedonistic order of nuns in *Dark Habits*.**



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# PEDRO ALMODÓVAR

He stuck with his vision through an obstacle course of financial barriers, making an astoundingly minimal number of compromises

## Bad Education

*Talk to Her* appeared to be a warm up for returning to a focus on male relationships. *Bad Education* is Almodóvar's second decidedly gay narrative involving a love story centered around two men. There is also a return to uncertain commentary on the Catholic Church. The director does not consider these stories to be anti-clerical, but has also stated that he is not so naïve as to think people will not be offended by them. When he swipes at the church, he does so in a way that almost dares the viewer to be offended. An early scene in *Bad Education* portrays Angel (Gael García Bernal) as he returns to his Catholic school to face a nefarious priest. Angel attempts to blackmail this priest who had molested him. As the two have a mostly tense interchange, the film flashes back to Angel as a child. As the film progresses, the scenes we are seeing are actually from a movie that Angel has written. As the film within the film progresses, Angel casts ambiguous light on his role in his relationship with the priest.

There is a funny dynamic when comparing the main characters in *Bad Education* and *Talk to Her*. *Bad Education* experienced a large drop in the director's visibility—due to the religious themes—while *Talk to Her* accumulated much more positive attention. *Bad Education* deals with the point of view of a man confronting a priest about their sexual relationship when he was a young boy. *Talk to Her* tells the story from the point of view of a man having sex with a woman in a coma. It is naïve to think that reactionary views on subject matter like religion will not affect a movie's attendance. Yet the young man confronting the priest for being raped as a child becomes less sympathetic due to blackmailing and the questionable role he plays in their relationship, while the nurse who is violating the coma patient in *Talk to Her* becomes a sympathetic character, even though he is performing an unthinkable act. Mainstream mores make the release of an Almodóvar film and the critical reaction a constant guessing game. But if the Catholic Church actually thought hard about the themes prevalent in *Bad Education*, a case could be made on their behalf that would certainly not be present in any other film. On paper, it is easy to figure out who the bad guy is on one of his movies, but there are rarely decisive answers in an Almodóvar film. His

ability to make a subtle point through the manipulation of his characters makes his movies some of the most vexing stories ever put to film.

## And Beyond...

His most recent films, *Volver* and *Broken Embraces*, are two caper-type narratives with heavy nods towards Hitchcock's style and techniques. Both films are labyrinths of diverging plot lines and have resonated strongly with worldwide audiences. Clearly, the DIY ethos has served Almodóvar well. He stood out among a cultural blossoming in Spain's post-Franco era. He stuck with his vision through an obstacle course of financial barriers, making an astoundingly minimal

number of compromises. He experimented outside of various trends in filmmaking and produced solid work by creating novelty out of existing genre conventions, including plot devices established by screwball

comedies, melodramas, and Hitchcock thrillers. Shaping Madrid into a diegetic world of his own image, he created settings where prostitutes, transvestites, and other downtrodden members of urban society have a voice beyond laughs or fodder for unsavory circumstance. He never adheres to formula and produces work without consideration of the morals of his audience or attempting to re-shock the world for the sake of getting attention.

Occasionally, it keeps him out of sight, but there is not a film he created solely for a paycheck and not a frame of his work that is not worth seeing. Almodóvar films are an unyielding orgasm of color and anarchy. There is a noticeable transition in his career from shock cinema, to more exploratory forms of transgressive cinema, to the exploration of the aging artist. As his abilities mature, he successfully manipulates classic Hollywood narratives and redefines genre conventions while simultaneously paying homage to the films he grew up with. While adherence to kitsch, color, and wildly unpredictable characters will always be in play, it seems there will never be a standard Almodóvar picture. An unstoppable force in cinema, Almodóvar continues to flourish as an independent and continues to make the world a safe place for camp.

More attention  
meant more  
controversy.

In her review of *Matador*, Pauline Kael wrote that Almodóvar "reactivates the clichés of film noir and brings them into the land of punk." There are a handful of filmmakers whose grace and style are unquestionably unique. Almodóvar has often proclaimed he is a thief, but his vision and ability to guide a story through a complex maze at a relatable pace is an undeniable gift to cinema.

## Suggested viewing

*Pepi, Luci, Bom*  
*Law of Desire*  
*Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*  
*High Heels*  
*Kika*  
*Talk to Her*

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# TOP FIVES

## RAZORCAKE STAFF

### Adrian Salas

*Top 5 Bands I've Been Turned on to through the Machinations of Vince "Battle of Atlanta" Battilana*

5. Black Tambourine / Go Sailor
4. Plaid Retina
3. Rosa / Punkin Pie
2. Banner Pilot
1. MC Miker G & Deejay Sven—There was something missing in my life until Vince introduced me to "Holiday Rap" and its paradigm shifting lyrics: "We're gonna ring rang-a-dong for a holiday!" Can life ever be the same after that?

### Aphid Peewit

1. *The Spits IV* CD
2. Eric Davidson, *We Never Learn: The Gunk Punk Undergut, 1988-2001* (book)
3. In Defence / Party By The Slice, Split 7"
4. Negative Approach, *Fair Warning Vol. 2* (DVD)
5. *The Lost Satsang of Nisargadatta Maharaj* (DVD)

### Art Ettinger

- Stoned At Heart, Self-titled LP
- Dopamines, *Expect the Worst* LP
- Black Marias, *A Clockwork Army* CD
- Sloppy Seconds, *Destroyed* (Reissue) 2 x LP
- Various Artists, *Is It Broke Yet?* LP

### Ben Snakepit

1. D4, the bootleg LP
2. Wild America 7"
3. Arctic Flowers 7"
4. Daylight Robbery LP
5. Drunkdriver, new LP

### Bill Pinkel

- Potential John's Dirtnap 7"
- Shellshag, *Rumors in Disguise* LP
- Tiltwheel, *The High Hate Us* LP
- Riverdales, *Tarantula* LP
- Gypsy, 4-Song tape

### Bradley Williams

- Raddest Folks and Best Times*
1. Chillin' with Her Radness Amy Adoyzie for a couple of days
  2. Burger Records
  3. 45 RPM Records
  4. Building a fence with Fose for Eric
  5. Riding bikes down from Del Cerro to the sea

### Bryan Static

- Best of 2009 That I Found Out About in 2010*
- Little Lungs, *Hoist Me Up*
  - Mean Jeans, *Are You Serious?*
  - P.S. Eliot, *Inverted Romance in Our Troubled Minds*
  - Reigning Sound, *Love and Curses*
  - The Spits, *Volume 4*

### Chris Pepus

- Top 5 Signs That a '70s-'80s Euro-Horror Film Revival Is Underway*
1. The "Zombo Italiano" festival at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City.
  2. The screenings of *The Beyond* at the Hi-Pointe in St. Louis.
  3. Filmbar70 in London showed *The Living Dead at the Manchester Morgue*.
  4. *House* played at the Webster Film Series in St. Louis. (Admittedly, that's a Japanese movie.)
  5. *The Blood Spattered Bride*. It's not screening anywhere, as far as I know: I just like that film. Okay, I guess there are only *three* signs.

### Craig Horky

1. Marc Navarro, RIP homie. Sorry we lost touch over the years.

2. My brother and his new wife. Congratulations Ryan and Kim.
3. Chason Huggins (and RadFest in general, but mostly just Chason)
4. IMADETHISMISTAKE, *Bow and Quiver*
5. Dear Landlord, *Dream Homes*

### CT Terry

- White Whale, Demo
- The-Dream, *Love vs. Money* LP
- Josh Small, *Juke* LP
- Flying Lotus, *Cosmogramma* LP
- Short story "Hell, Where Barry Manilow Sings" in *Knee-Jerk* #12

### Craven Rock

1. Endpoint, Sunspring, Parlour at Headliner's, Louisville, KY
2. Kinghorse, Self-titled and *Too Far Gone: Unreleased Records 1988-1992* CDs
3. Kate Bush, *Hounds of Love* LP
4. Philippe Petit (tightrope walker who walked between the twin towers)
5. *Abandoned Cars* by Jim Lane (book/graphic novel)

### Daryl Gussin

- Daylight Robbery, *Through the Confusion* LP
- El Banda, *Skutki Uboczne* 2 x LP
- This Moment In Black History, *Public Square* LP
- Dan Padilla / Drunken Boat, split 7" tie with Stymie / Kicking Spit, split 7"
- Burning Love

### Dave Williams

- Top 5 Inevitably Awesome Things Happening This Summer/Early Fall:*
1. Year Zero touring with Tiltwheel!
  2. Celebrating Jessica and my first wedding anniversary in NYC!
  3. Crusades' 7" release show with Red Dons coinciding with Daryl's visit!
  4. Maiden in Ottawa!
  5. Euro tour with The Steve Adamyk Band! Yay German pals!

### Designated Dale's

*Top 5 Jack "The Winnebago Man" Rebney Quotes*

1. "I wonder what the fuck the real dialogue is!?"
2. "Thank you very much, I appreciate that, Tony...don't slam the fuckin' door! *NO MORE!* Now listen, I gotta give a, a clue here, now. I don't want any more *bullshit*, any time during the day, from anyone—that includes ME!"
3. "I gotta read it again because my mind is just a piece of *shit* this morning!"
4. (Mumbling under his breath to the camera crew) "Maaan, I'd like to kick your fuckin' head in!"
5. "The accoutrement that you will need... *ACCOUTREMENT!* What is *that* shit?!"

### Jake Shut

1. Going on tour with Droids Attack and all the people who gave us a place to stay and free drinks
2. Off With Their Heads, *In Desolation*
3. Birthday Suits, *The Minnesota: Mouth to Mouth*
4. Coffins, *Buried Death*
5. Black Tusk, *Taste the Sin*

### Kristen Nakano

- Top 5 Japanese Monster Movies*
- Godzilla vs. *The Smog Monster (Hedora)*—1971
  - Gamera vs. *Guiron*—1969
  - Latitude Zero—1969
  - Space Amoeba (Yog - *Monster from Space*—1970
  - *Attack of the Mushroom People (Matango)*—1963

### Mademoiselle Ever

a.k.a "the girl about town"

- Screaming Females, *Power Move* LP
- Descarados, *Descarados* 7"
- Illegal, *Error De Orden* 7"
- Ra'kosi, Self-titled 7"
- Tuberculosis, *Disfrasandose* 7"

### Jeff Proctor

*Top 5 Reasons Why Johnny Rad Fest (July 22nd-25th, San Diego) Will Be the Best Fest of the Summer:*

1. The Zeros
2. The Spits
3. Nobunny
4. Tokyo Electron
5. The Dissimilars

"Top fives which consist primarily of records that the author enjoys and thinks others may enjoy as well."

**Jennifer Federico***Top 5 Cool Things about a Quick Trip to Sweden*

1. Regulations at Debaser
2. Bike tour of Stockholm
3. Moose Safari!
4. Extra vowels
5. Hammarby vs. Ljungskile at Söderstadion

**Jim Ruland***Top 5 Jimmy Lee Lindsey Cuts Stuck in My Head*

- "Robots on the Loose Again" Nervous Patterns
- "Destruction of a Man" Destruction Unit
- "I Get Nervous" Lost Sounds
- "Looking for Danger" (cover) The Reatards
- "My Shadow" Jay Reatard

**"Front Row" Joe Dana**

1. Sass Dragons and Toys That Kill at San Pedro Brewing Company in San Pedro
2. Cheap Girls at The Warehouse at 12th & G in Chino
3. Prizzy Prizzy Please, Spokesmen, and the Ex-Gentlemen at the Echo Curio in Echo Park
4. Shanghai River and Spider Problem at Vlad the Retailer in Hel-Mel
5. (This hasn't happened yet but I already know it is going to be rad) Dan Padilla and Madison Bloodbath at the American Legion Hall in Highland Park.

**Joshua Ian Robles**

1. "Pretty Good," Polysics
2. "Thrash Unreal," Against Me!
3. "Bomb," Darkbuster
4. "Oi to the World," The Vandals
5. "The Passenger," Iggy Pop

**Juan Espinosa**

1. Walls EP / Nerveskade EP (Iron Lung)
2. Vile Gash EP / Raw Nerve LP (Youth Attack)
3. Society Of Friends CD / Quattro Stagioni LP (625)
4. Burning Love Demo EP / Burning Love *Don't Ever Change* EP (Deranged)
5. Pigeon Religion *Scorpion* Milk EP / Dry Rot *Philistine* LP (Parts Unknown)

**Keith Rosson**

- The Wild, *Set Ourselves Free*
- Hostage Life, *Centre of the Universe*

- Songs For Emma, *Red Lies and Black Rhymes*
- State Lottery, *When the Night Comes*
- Submission Hold, *Eat More Garlic (The Demos)*

**Kurt Morris**

1. Guided by Voices, *Bee Thousand*
2. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, seasons 1-3
3. Graduating from grad school
4. *Burn Collector* #14
5. Al Burian, *Natural Disasters* (book)

**Matt Average**

- Warvictims, *Domedagen* CD
- Sotatila, *Vituiks Meni* EP
- Pigs, *Illuminati House Party* LP
- The Homicides, *Black Leather Redneck* 12" EP
- *The Fury* #18 zine / *Mountza* #4 zine

**Mike Frame**

1. Airbourne, *No Guts No Glory* CD
2. Roky Erickson, *True Love Cast out All Evil* LP
3. Mississippi John Hurt, *Today* LP
4. Sharon Jones & Dap Kings, *Learned the Hard Way* CD
5. Rocket From The Tombs, *I Sell Soul* 7"

**Nardwuar The Human Serviette**

1. *At Both Ends* #9 /10 Fanzine (Incredible Vancouver punk fanzines' last issue ever)
2. *Treat Me like Dirt: An Oral History of Punk in Toronto and Beyond* book, by Liz Worth
3. *Mongrel Zine* #8 (Filled with so much garage rock goodness!)
4. Defektors, *Bottom of the City* LP
5. Various Artists, *Buried Treasures: Winnipeg Rock Gems 1958-1974* CD

**Nighthawk**

- Top 5 Lines from Boogadaboogadaboogada!, Part 2*
- "Love to hate, I love to hate. Deck the halls with Sharon Tate."
  - "Always walking into trees, wakes me up to ask if I'm asleep. Sits around, stares into space. Oh god I hate her face."
  - "The lake is full of creepy snobs, I stare to get annoyed. This isn't Honolulu dummy, this is Illinois."
  - "I don't care if it's against the law, I wanna live my life in the raw."

- "Got a half a pack of cigarettes and my wallet is completely bare again. I might be broke, but I don't care. I just watch TV in my baggy underwear."

**Rene Navarro**

- Reigning Sound, *Break Up...Break Down* LP
- Leatherface, *Horsebox* CD
- The Breeders, *Last Splash* CD
- Pangea, *Hold My Hand* CD
- Hairdos On Fire / Hotdog! Split 7"

**Rev. Nørh**

- Poppees, *Pop Goes the Anthology* LP
- Various Artists, *Florida's Dying Party Platter* LP
- Sticks N Stones, *Red Light* 45
- Half Rats, *For the Sake of Love* 45
- Top fives which consist primarily of records that the author enjoys and thinks others may enjoy as well.

**Ryan Horky**

1. New Superchunk this year
2. New Superchunk this year
3. New Superchunk this year
4. New Superchunk this year
5. New Superchunk this year

**Samantha Beerhouse**

1. Screaming Females, *Power Move* LP
2. Statues, *Terminal Bedroom* 7"
3. Randy, *Welfare Problems* LP
4. Various Artists, *One Kiss Can Lead to Another* LP
5. Tilt, *Til It Kills* LP

**Sean Koepenick***Bands I Am Stoked to See at The Big Takeover Fest in NYC*

1. Channel Three
2. The Avengers
3. Libertines US
4. For Against
5. Springhouse

**Steve Hart**

- Blacktusk, *Taste the Sin*
- Melvins, *The Bride Screamed Murder*
- The Blood Of Heroes, *The Blood of Heroes*
- Mike Patton, *Mondo Cane*
- Bastard, *No Hope in Here*

**Steve Larder**

1. Drainland / Grinding Halt, Split 10"
2. Attack Of The Mad Axeman, Self-titled 12"
3. Noxagt, Self-titled CD

4. Seein' Red / Mihoen, Split 10"
5. Napalm Death, *Leaders Not Followers Pt.2* 12"

**Steve**

1. The Wombles, *You're Invited to a Ping Pong Ball*
2. The National, *High Violet*
3. Unnatural Helpers, *Cracked Love and other Drugs*
4. Scientists, *Pissed on another Planet*
5. Looking forward to not arguing with every damn body about every damn thing!

**Todd Price AKA Buttertooth**

1. Trans Am, *Liberation* CD
2. Swell Maps, *A Trip to Marineville* CD
3. The Bellakun, *Bendicion Maldita*
4. Black Lips, *Let It Bloom* CD
5. *Audiology: Science to Practice* (book)

**Todd Taylor**

- Dan Padilla / Drunken Boat, Split 7"
- God Equals Genocide / No People, Split 7"
- Statues, *New People Make Us Nervous* LP
- Potential Johns "Can I Really Not Go with You" b/w "Past Due": 7" (tie) Mind Spiders *World Destroyed* 7"
- Young Governor, "Cindy's Gonna Save Me" b/w "Cannabanoids": 7"
- Gypsy, Self-titled 4-song CDEP

**Ty Stranglehold***Top 5 "O" Bands*

1. Operation Ivy
2. Olivewawn
3. The Outlets
4. Off With Their Heads
5. Oppressed Logic

**Vincent Battilana**

- Tie: Summer Cats, *Songs for Tuesdays* LP; Happy Birthday LP
- Fever B, *The Lonely Sailor Sessions* 12" EP
- Tie: RVIVR LP; Shellshag, *Rumors in Disguise* LP
- Stuns Guns, *And There Was Nothing We Could Do about It* LP
- Dirty Marquee's tracks at [dirtymarquee.bandcamp.com](http://dirtymarquee.bandcamp.com)

**A. RESTREPO AND THE OLDER SIBLINGS / JUSTIN CLIFFORD AND SOME OTHER PEOPLE: Split 7"**

Two sides of weirdo folk from Bloomington's Friends And Relatives label. I bought a CDR of A. Restrepo a while back from this label and found it to be totally overbearing, with the singer's annoying voice and obvious biting of Mountain Goats-style imagery in the lyrics. However, with three songs on a split 7", it works out rather well. In moderation, I can appreciate the absurd magical realism that is mixed in with the songs about pretty common themes. The Justin Clifford side is more lo-fi folk stuff that sounds maybe, slightly, like the most whacked-out of the Sebadoh catalog, if I can compare it to anything. It's a little too much on the cute side of things, but they're not afraid to get really strange and experimental by messing around with, well, I don't know what they're messing around with, but it comes out warbled and twisted at times and buzzy and feedback-damaged at others. —Craven Rock (Friends And Relatives)

**AK47: Self-titled: CD**

I have a weird hate of bands reusing band names. A quick search shows that this band name was used by a Texas band that has a single that is heralded by KBD record collectors and the name also was used by a prominent punk band from Croatia. Using the excuse that those bands do not exist anymore is lazy if that is what they are going to use. Going in their favor, they do offer a jam-packed affair with twenty-four blistering hardcore punk songs done in about twenty-two minutes. It's a well-recorded batch of songs that adds to the power of their to-the-point songs. The band shows that they have some musical chops in between their blasts, too. Vocals remind me of Deek from Oi Polloi and the lyrics of all things that anger them makes me think of the Nihilistics. This is definitely worthy of being uploaded to the iPod. —Donofthedeath (AK47, akfortyseven.net)

**ALICJA-POP: "Shining Apple" b/w "Walking the Cow": 7"**

Truth in advertising, this is Alicja Trout (River City Tanlines, Mouserocket, Lost Sounds) playing straight-up, '60s-inspired pop by way of *Oranges and Lemons* XTC with gentle keyboard caresses. One original, one Daniel Johnston cover. It's extremely pretty, full of innocence, and very far afield from what I normally listen to... but goddamn it if Alicja Trout can't hold my hand far into a scary land that I'm fearful of—"indie rock I don't understand made by members of once-frenetic punk bands"—and

# RECORD REVIEWS



**"I like New Found Glory as much as the next guy—assuming the next guy doesn't like them—and I like Hot Water Music, but probably much less than the next guy."**

—Vincent  
YOUNG GENERALS 7"

show me something, well, something that's beautiful. —Todd (Certified PR, certifiedprrecords.com)

**AMERICAN CHEESEBURGER / RELIGIOUS AS FUCK: Split: LP**

American Cheeseburger: Spastic thrash with wild tempo changes popping up all over the place and a singer that's gotta spend his waking hours perpetually sucking on throat lozenges. A whole different kind of spastic thrash with wild tempo changes popping up all over the place, RAF seem to have a wee bit more metal-by-way-of-Negative-Approach buried in there somewhere, and the guitarist often opts to let chords ring rather than strumming wildly at them. Pretty good pairing. —Jimmy Alvarado (No Idea)

**ANDREW JACKSON JIHAD / THE GUNSHY: Split: 7"**

While I really enjoyed the recording of Andrew Jackson Jihad's *Can't Maintain* album, I feel these songs somehow lack the raw, crucial, heart-on-sleeve dynamic of their earlier recordings. To be honest, I was really hoping for a return to their acoustic form, if only for this one 7". Usually, their songs get immediately grafted into my psyche, but these songs slip out faster than math equations. When you flip this record, you flip the energy level as well. The

Gunshy sound a lot like the Pogues with cool horns and strings. It's cool that their second song is called "Only Sean Can Judge Me," in reference to an awesome Andrew Jackson Jihad EP. —Rene Navarro (Silver Sprocket Bicycle Club)

**ANGRY SNOWMANS: Self-titled: CD**

Nothing chaps my hide more than the thought of folks being oppressed, and the best punk rock has always managed to highlight the plight of those living under the boot heel of some asshole exploiter. This album is a heartfelt primal scream from one of the most brutally overworked, yet criminally overlooked class of worker. I'm talking, of course, about Santa's elf helpers. Three hundred and sixty five days a year (sixty six on leap year, thanks to Pope Gregory) these folks are worked in conditions Dickens would've found revolting to sate the greed of a planet and the obsessions of an overweight sadist with a thing for red pajamas. The Snowmans repurpose twenty of punk rock's finest songs from the likes of the Misfits, Adolescents, D.I., (Canada's) Subhumans, Minor Threat, Youth Brigade, Dead Kennedys, and, yes, the Angry Samoans to call attention to the deplorable conditions the "Elves of the North Pole" have endured for millennia, with titles like "Ebenezer Über Alles," "Richard Hung His

Sock," "Somebody's Gonna Get Their Halls Decked in Tonight," and "Slave to Saint Nick." These socially aware recreations of punk classics are executed so damn well makes this a must for your favorite anarchist rally. Fucking Santa Claus. I'd shoot the fucker out of the sky next Christmas, but it'd only render the poor little fellas unemployed. —Jimmy Alvarado (myspace.com/angrYSnowmans)

**ARMS ALOFT: Comfort at Any Cost: CD**

I can say with confidence that this six-song EP will make my Top 10 list for this year. The CD combines their self-titled 7" and their recent Kiss Of Death split 7" with Fake Boys, and it just so happens that this is some of the most assured, muscular, hook-filled, and smart music I've heard in a long time. Combine the fattened-guitar steamrolling that Rivethead dished out with that weird juxtaposition that the Lawrence Arms frequently manage, how they make solemnity and damage sound somehow redemptive. That's pretty close to *Comfort at Any Cost*. Arms Aloft have crafted a handful of songs here that are wicked smart, ridiculously catchy, and wrenched from one of the most basic tenets of punk and, yeah, folk music: the idea of protest, of flying in the face of. And they do it beautifully and with just the right amount of swagger. I particularly love this type of stuff but, like sugary pop punk in the '90s, we've become inundated with bands like this. There's a glut of groups doing this type of stuff. And yet I can think of less than half a dozen bands who are doing it as well—with the same amount of obvious passion and jagged-edge songwriting—as these guys are. I'm moving to their home state in about a month and plan on making it a mission to catch 'em live as often as possible. Grab this one up. —Keith Rosson (Gilead Media)

**ASSPISS: Fuck Off and Die: 7" EP**

Despite a silly name and a hackneyed title, these guys lay down for tracks of some on-point, no frills, no-bullshit thrash. Good stuff, I gotta say. —Jimmy Alvarado (Suburban White Trash)

**ATOMIC SUPLEX:**

**Rock & Roll Must Die: 7"**

There are very few times in life that a grown man can get away with claiming that a phrase as simplistic and unimaginative as "the English Guitar Wolf" constitutes a valid review. This, however, is one of those times ((except for "Do the Suplex," which sounds like the Mad having an almost-lucid moment)). The English Guitar Wolf. Word. BEST SONG: "Rock & Roll Must Die" BEST SONG TITLE: "Do

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the Suplex” **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** There are no songs on this record that don’t contain the words “rock & roll” or “suplex” in their title. Again, word.—Rev. Nørb (Frantic City)

**BAYONETTES, THE: “Guilty Pleasure” b/w “Outta My Mind”: 7”**

Epigraphs on a tombstone are bittersweet. They evoke the best memories of the deceased. They’re also a reminder that they’re dead: “Beloved band. Daughter to one. Sister to many. Servant to none.” The Bayonettes, quite possibly the contemporary Canadian answer to X-Ray Spex, called it quits in 2008. These two overdriven, jumping-for-the-ceiling, scream-until-breathless songs from 2006 are right on track with what made the Bayonettes such a kick. I miss ‘em. In celebration and memoriam, “Guilty Pleasure” will get cranked so their ghosts can continue to dance around my house. —Todd (Deranged)

**BEAT BEAT: Self-titled: LP**

Catchy, hook-saturated garage pop. The kind that would’ve fit well on Sympathy For The Record Industry back when it ruled the roost. Rather than burying the whole thing in a morass of bad recording quality, they go for a clean, straightforward mix with enough punch to accentuate the well-written tunes. —Jimmy Alvarado (Bachelor)

**BIRD NAMES: Twenty Charters: 10” EP**  
Arty stuff here with creative instrumentation, sludgy rhythms, and a dream-like quality. —Jimmy Alvarado (Pecan Crazy)

**BLATZ: Cheaper than the Beer: 7”**

Imagine if the Crass song “Reject of Society” was a band and recorded an EP in Berkeley, California circa 1991. Well it pretty much happened and this is it. Powerful, off-kilter songs that are just so pissed, almost tuneless, and really fucking good. While prolific bands like this are lousy with context, it’s nice to separate these songs from everything else and enjoy them for how strangely beautifully ugly they really are. —Daryl (Silver Sprocket)

**BOBOT ADRENALINE: Dumb Bomb: CD**

This is another solid effort from L.A.’s punkabilly trio. It’s stuffed to the gills with rockabilly riffs, gang choruses, and armchair politicking. Confronting militarism, war, and poverty, Bobot is the very articulate mouthpiece for the disenfranchised. While The Clash influences bleed through in “East of the Docks” and “Blast,” where the latter’s guitar structures are pretty close to “London Calling,” Bobot is not content to mimic. Striking a balance between melodic sway and roiling drums, I think this is their best work yet. If you’re in the L.A. area, check ‘em out. Recommended. —Kristen K. (Basement)

**BOMBÓN: El Party Con Bombón: Cassette**

Apart from sheer nostalgia for people of a certain age ((and perhaps consideration for those of us who still drive motor vehicles manufactured after 1980 but prior to 2003)), there really are no abiding reasons why anyone should ever release anything on cassette again, ever. Cassettes were a fucking DUMB format. Their fidelity decreased every time you played them, they got dusty and warbly and fucked up, they got twisted and kinked and snapped, tape transport from song to song was a time-consuming and aggravating pain in the ass, and every now and again your cassette deck would just randomly eat a tape, sort of like Charlie Brown’s kite-eating tree, but less epic. About the best thing I could say for pre-recorded cassettes ((as opposed to mix tapes, which still remain the gold standard for such things)) is that if you didn’t like what was on there, you could tape over it. That said, Bombón are a pretty cool, bargain-basement, instrumental ((with occasional female Beatnik Termite-like “whaa-oooh” backing vocals and/or screams)) combo who have dispensed with such restrictive social detritus such as track listings, presumably because such Tools Of Order interfere with their prime directive of PARTY. The general vibe is reverby—but not annoyingly so—and the bass occasionally acts as a second guitar, allowing the *guitar* guitar to vacillate back ‘n’ forth between almost ((but not really)) Fall-Outs-like chord chomping to Cramps-like single-

string twangling. *I state unequivocally that this is the best cassette i’ve heard all month!* Now knock it off. **BEST SONG:** The one where it sounds like the girls in the background are saying “Homos on the fire, wha-oh-oh, homos on the fire, wha-oh-oh” **BEST SONG TITLE:** *Bombón are not part of your machine and reject your restrictive taxonomies accordingly!* **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Never mind, i found some song titles printed on the cassette shell. I guess my favorite song is “La Playa,” then. —Rev. Nørb (Burger/45 RPM)

**BRENDAN KELLY & JOE McMAHON: Wasted Potential: CD**

Acoustic stuff is tricky work, especially in a setting like this: two frontmen of two popular bands (Lawrence Arms and Smoke Or Fire) rendering acoustic versions of their songs. To their credit, I’d say that *Wasted Potential* is reasonably successful. I’ve heard Smoke Or Fire on a handful of comp songs over the years and never really found them that memorable. Unfortunately, Joe McMahon’s solo outings seem to yield the same results: his voice comes across as a bit too high-pitched to compliment the git-fiddle in his hands, and the songs themselves tend to blend together. Brendan Kelly’s material fares better, if only for the fact that his bandmate Chris McCaughan sings on half of his songs, lending a bit of variety. The bias is obvious: I’ve enjoyed the Lawrence Arms for years, and hearing these songs was a



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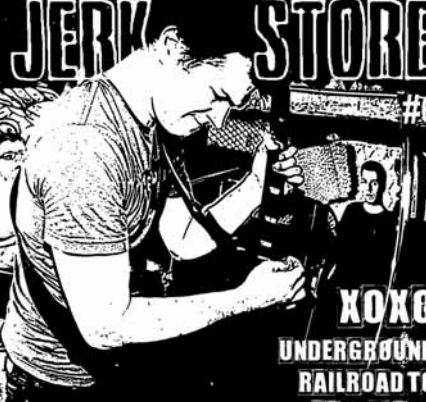
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treat. Granted, it's certainly not the best venue to be *introduced* to the songs, but hearing the solemnity of "Necrotism"—somewhat buried in the original, electric version—and the subdued, yearning rendition of Jawbreaker's "Kiss the Bottle" was pretty awesome. I'd say *Wasted Potential* is mostly for hardcore fans of either band, but Kelly's side (though why McCaughan isn't credited for any of the vocal work here is beyond me) carries the bulk of the weight. Fun record. —Keith Rosson (Red Scare)

#### BROKEN NEEDLE: *Discography*: CD

Los Angeles circa now is not at all synonymous with the words "great" and "hardcore scene." And that's too bad because amidst bands and venues that come and go without leaving a lasting impression, there are bands like Broken Needle who prove that punk and hardcore isn't a passing phase for them. Like any band that evolves into their sound, members came and went from the likes of Life's Halt, Total Chaos, and Street Trash. Eventually, they would settle down with their current lineup comprised of Holier Than Thou?, Knife Fight, and Fields Of Fire alumni, not to mention one incredibly talented prodigy drummer who isn't old enough to buy alcohol yet has also lent his services to Dr. Know (among others). This CD compiles the band's up-to-date discography, spanning their 2004 demo (a demo I played the shit out of in anticipation of a proper release), a full length LP, EP, and compilation tracks. Most of

the bands previously mentioned (the mohawked guys being the glaring exception) are spot-on references to Broken Needle's sound: anthem-inducing, pit-starting hardcore deeply rooted in the influence of the first wave of bands from both the East and West coasts of the U.S. It's very obvious that the guitars lead the band in their earlier recordings, whereas the newer songs are much more straight forward in approach. You can't count Los Angeles out of the hardcore world just yet. Not if Broken Needle has anything to say about it. —Juan Espinosa (Lengua Armada, myspace.com/brokenneedle)

#### BROWN SUGAR: *Self-titled*: Tape

Packaged like a cassingle, this tape starts out sounding vaguely punky/poppy, sort of like a cross between Dinosaur Jr and the Doughboys or something. From there, the band plows straight ahead with some solid hardcore punk. Actually, this band sounds quite a bit like a less polished Paint It Black, another Rolling Stones song-named band. There must be something about taking your name from Mick 'n' Keith 'n' the boys that leads to gruff hardcore punk stylings. —Mike Frame (Feral Kid)

#### BUCK PETS, THE:

##### *Rares and Unreleased*: CD

This is a new outtakes collection from this underappreciated outfit from Texas. "Sick and Stoned," "A Longer Look," and "Disappointed" are stand out songs here, but these all would have been good enough to get on an

album proper. Only the last tune—a jazz vamp called "Funny That Way" should have been left in the garage. Otherwise, this is a worthy addition to a criminally out of print catalogue for this band from the '90s. I heard they just did a reunion show, so go find Ted Nicely and give us a new record! —Sean Koeppenick (Self-released)

#### BUSINESS, THE: *Doing the Business*: CD

A sort of odd 'n' suds deal here, with four newer tunes that include a smokin' version of the Professionals' "One Two Three" (also known as the Avengers tune "Second to None," also known as the Penelope Houston tune "Girls"). Also included is a live recording of a brief, five-song set constituting their only performance at the Marquee Club in 1982, and another live tune from a more recent gig. All told, it isn't necessarily a crucial purchase for those other than completists and fanatics, but it doesn't soil their rep any. —Jimmy Alvarado (Sailor's Grave)

#### CANADIAN RIFLE: *Facts*: 7" EP

One of the odd wrinkles that develops when reviewing records is separating the layers of knowledge and fandom that someone reading a review may have. It's tough to satisfy folks who are already intimate with a band's production, and, at the same time, explain the band sufficiently to someone who's never heard of the band. Then, you have to explain if the record's good. With that in mind, if you've never heard Canadian Rifle but you like the gruff-voiced "I

hate you. Modern society is a plague, but the good news is that I hate myself even more than anything else"—isms of Off With Their Heads mixed with a good dose of walked-on bubblegum scraped off the sidewalk, chances are you're predisposed to enjoy Canadian Rifle. For those of you who are intimate with the band's output, what's not on this record is what I miss: that second guitar that twined like a snake around a pole when Jake talk-sings. When I'm just sitting here, only listening to the record, headphones on, it's the most apparent. Yet, when I plop, crank, and play—a much more natural listening environment—my fists pump freely along to Jake's infectious maledictions against modern, cappuccino-chokin' society. —Todd (Residue, residue-records.com)

#### CHEMICALS: *Bubble City*: 7" EP

I wonder if this band could have been one of those bands who appeared on both the "Hell Comes To Your House" and "Life Is Ugly So Why Not Kill Yourself" compilation LPs back in '82? Wait...hold on...the only band that was on both of those album was 100 Flowers. Hmmm. Then no, no they couldn't be. *But they could have been on the Sudden Death compilation album ((given a proper time machine))!* Yes. Yes they could. Songs about building cities in bubbles under Niagara Falls are niche-y, but once you find that audience, brother, it's all high-fives and Skittles™ thenceforth. BEST SONG: "Bubble City" BEST



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# **CHURCH OF GRAVITRON: 19+Sterile: CD**

Static- and feedback-laden soundscapes, four tracks in total, are the rule of thumb here. While many others treading similar ground too often merely grab the nearest radio, tune it off-station, and record the results as some sort of quasi-artistic statement, it's clear here that much more thought was given to what was being done. This makes all the difference and the result, while still nowhere near the traditional verse-chorus-verse definition of "music," is abundant in moody, screechy, cohesive charm. It's definitely an acquired taste, but those with the palate will find much to savor. —Jimmy Alvarado (Doom Town)

# **CREDENTIALS, THE: *Routines*: LP**

So if the Pinhead Gunpowder / D4 split and the Screeching Weasel / Born Against split somehow decided to do a split together, it might sound something like this. Pop punk with slightly cruder edge; throw in a couple songs about politics, and a couple about girls (respectively), and your standard undercurrent of shit being fucked up. Record it at Witches With Dicks' practice space, Cometbus can do the layout. It definitely has its rookie hiccups, but it has some impressive moments too, and since shit like this

is pretty much right up my alley, I will be spinning this all summer. —Nick Toerner (Self-released)

# **CRUDDY: *New Level*: 7"**

Strange, simple cover art leads to smokin' punk rock. Take the minimalist punk of the Urinals and electrify it with Greg Ginn's guitar. Jab jab jab jab jab jab jab jab jab jab jab jab jab jab fuckyeah. This is great. Less is more, as long as the band gives it their all, with energy and some thought. And from Austin—take that, Stevie Ray. Can't wait for more from Cruddy. Simply kickass. —Speedway Randy (Let's Pretend / Basement Scream)

# **CUTE LEPPERS, THE: *Smart Accessories*: CD**

The second album from the new band by the Briefs' founder Steve E Nix and later Briefs' member Kicks, continuing the power sugar pops their previous band invested everything in. Err, what else would you need to know? That should make it automatic for you, whether it's run-out-and-get or total avoidance. I feel like it's by-the-numbers punk, but hard to deny anyone their love for all things Cheap Trick. —Speedway Randy (1-2-3-4 Go!, 1234gorerecords.com)

# **DAWN / SANCTION: *Split*: 10" EP**

Dawn: Occasionally grindy, occasionally crusty stuff with a singer who doesn't sound like he's impersonating his favorite Sesame Street character. Sanction: More straight-ahead thrash stuff with a

singer whose spleen has to tickle when he screeches like that. —Jimmy Alvarado (Anti-Corporate Music)

# **DEVOUR: *Insect Circuitry*: EP**

I like the darkness that's in the music and lyrics on this record. "Laugh Track" offers a bleak opinion of society: "People these days / Just character sketches..." then ends with "Where's the laugh track for your shitty life? Right here on my lips." I thought their LP from not too long ago was really good, and this pretty much picks up where that left off. I can hear definite nods to the early style of COC and Neurosis, and these guys use those influences well. Tempos range from mid to semi fast. There's a heaviness that hangs over this whole record, and none of it is sacrificed for speed. Instead, this is a slow steady burn. The sort of record you listen to and bask in your contempt. —M.Avr (Headcount, headcountrecords.com)

# **D.R.I.: *Crossover*: (Millennium Edition): LP**

I remember when this record came out. Suddenly people who would not have even bothered to listen to *Violent Pacification* or the *Dirty Rotten EP/LP* were listening to these guys. While it's certainly a milestone in the history of hardcore and metal, I don't necessarily think this album is all that good. There are a lot of clunkers and, when compared to the early stuff, it doesn't have the same fire. DRI raised the bar for bands in the realm of how fast can you go, and all fans of thrash are eternally grateful.

They had a huge impact on crossover, but along the way they lost the punch of the early stuff. Was it to reach a larger audience as many accused them of? No idea there. But I do know I've tried to get into this record ever since it came out. A few of my friends thought this album was awesome. I just could never get into it. Still can't. But, if you're a diehard fan, this edition comes on red vinyl, and is remastered. The CD version comes with extra songs. —M.Avr (Beer City, beercityrecords.com)

# **DRUID PERFUME: *Don't Eat 'Em They're Poison*: 7"**

Follow-up to their full-length LP, which I haven't heard. But this is pretty fun. Mucky muck weird punk rock, from the school of "If we can't win them over, we can pound them into submission." It's not calculus rock, but it does feel like some thinkin' is going on with weird vibes, drones, plodding along with weird timing and a constant fuzz mess. AND complete with saxophone! Singer sings strained screams—reminds me of the '90s vibe when garage rock started crossing over with noise jazz, drifting into four and five minute-odd songs. Label says the band has two members of the Piranhas. Ahhhhh, now it's making sense. —Speedway Randy (X1, x-recs.com)

# **DRUNKEN BOAT / DAN PADILLA: *Split*: 7"**

Drunken Boat: Blurry-eyed. Ragged-voiced. Dirty-charming. Alcohol-soaked glimmers of hope seen floating above

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tatters of wreckage. Catchy, frayed-end DIY punk in line with Bent Outta Shape and Ringers. "Shoot and Miss" is a song about the death of a close friend and musician and these two songs are some of the strongest material I've heard from Drunken Boat. Dan Padilla: Here's a bear trap. Members of this band have, undeniably, inspired the launching of boatloads of gruff-voiced, sparking guitar "win by losing" bands, where their charm lies in not taking themselves too seriously but giving everything to the music they play. Here's how they avoid stepping in the bear trap they set: It's not a band standing around going "what should we sound like?" But "I need to get this out or I'm gonna go crazy," and it happens to take this bear trap shape, waiting for you to come poking around the forest unawares to snap its jaws around your foot, to chomp on down, and not let you go without a hell of a fight. -Todd (Must Yeam, drunkenboatpdx@gmail.com / Fast Crowd, fastcrowdrecords.com)

#### EASTER MONKEYS: *Splendor of Sorrow*: CD

The Easter Monkeys were a Cleveland punk band from the early 1980s, as you might guess from their label association. *Splendor of Sorrow* is a collection of their sole LP, some live tracks, and a few scattered comp tracks. If you enjoy other stuff Smog Veil has released, I'm sure you'd like this too. It's pretty rocking generally, and there's some great saxophone skronk over the rock. -Ryan Horky (Smog Veil)

#### ENEMY, THE: *First Album*: LP

Not at all what I was expecting. Judging from the red, white, and blue silk screened cover of some tripped-out shit, I was narrow minded in thinking I was about to hear some noise damaged art skronk. I was actually looking forward to hearing something along those lines. Instead, what lies within this retina-damaging cover is some mid-tempo punk rock that reminds me of recent bands like the Red Dons, Estranged, Cola Freaks, and the sort. Maybe a little bit of early Wire (particularly in the song "I Won't Let You Waste Me") in there as well. There's a member from the Secret Prostitutes in here as well, which comes as no surprise, as both bands sound similar. After my initial surprise wore off, I found myself playing this record over and over. As it revealed itself with each subsequent listen, I became most confident that this is a great record. It's not over-the-top, in-your-face, bash-you-over-the-head-with-a-riff sort of stuff. The power is something longer lasting, with a little restraint, pacing about like a prize fighter. -M.Avrq (Team Science, teamsciencerecords.com)

#### ERGS!, THE:

##### *Thrash Compactor*: 1-sided 7" EP

Ostensibly, this is the last Ergs! vinyl to ever be released (assuming no reunions and/or live shows making it to vinyl a la Scared of Chaka). *Thrash Compactor* is a blood-clotted slapshot of five songs that would make The Neos or (short-hair) DRI proud. What

makes me proud is that this 7" doesn't come across as "Oooh, we're a punk band (insert Homer Simpson prancy dance and finger waggling). Wouldn't it be weird and funny to play all fast and thrashy?" Nope. It's a bonafide thrash record made by a bunch of dudes who inflated the pop punk bubble past most people's previous expectations, filled it with enough genres to kill a rhinoceros, then popped that bubble. The Ergs!, from their first record through the last, made music sound like a hell of a party. This one sounds like a bolt of lightning hitting the top of the capitol building. Viva Los Ergs! -Todd (Grave Mistake / Firestarter)

#### FEVER B:

##### *The Lonely Sailor Sessions*: 12" EP

I don't know if formats get any better than this: 12" that plays at 45 RPM with the same program on both sides. I also don't know if I've heard anything this good recently. Imagine The Nerves coming out fifteen years later and recording in a bedroom after having listened to Teenage Fanclub and early Ramones. Supplement that with a soft-voiced rocker who exudes a striking amount of self confidence in his concerned-yet-suave delivery. Note the subtle hint of Big Star. Now be amazed by the results: fuzzed-out power pop run through an indie rock filter that has an appreciation for punk. (From what I found on the internet, this is one of the guys from The Fevers, whom I checked out after hearing this; they are good but not nearly as good as this. I do believe

that I also read that Fever B actually recorded this a while back.) This one is limited to 500 (at least numbered out of 500) and comes in a screen-printed jacket with hand-stamped labels. Don't wait. I really don't know how this got outta HQ and into my hands. I can't recommend this enough. -Vincent (Burger)

#### FINAL CONFLICT: *In the Family*: EP

Not to be confused with the Final Conflict from Southern California. This Final Conflict was from Minneapolis, and around long before the better-known FC. Originally released on Reflex in 1983 and produced by Bob Mould. Yep, that Bob Mould. I first came across this record in the MRR collection years ago. Ever since, it's been on my "really want" list. Even bid for it on eBay once a few years back. But it went out of my price range pretty quick. So, I'm pretty stoked that Havoc reissued this. These guys were fast hardcore similar to early Die Kreuzen. Something about the Midwestern hardcore bands of that time is that they had this undeniable raw power that the majority of bands on the coasts lacked. The songs are crushers with an abrasive edge and a vocalist who sounds like he's on the verge of coming unglued. Four songs in all and it's a great listen the whole way through. -M.Avrq (Havoc, havocrex.com)

#### FIX MY HEAD / KNIFE IN THE LEG:

##### *Split*: LP

Decent split here. Fix My Head are blazing hardcore with a vocalist who

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## water under the bridge

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has an awesome, bellowing voice. His voice hits like a ton of bricks, and I have to say, really gives the band's sound a tough edge. The music is fast and abrasive, but there are some layers as well. "Wish" is my favorite on here. The guitar accentuates the twisted outlook presented in the lyrics. The only throwaway on here is "Mission: Hipster." Hipsters have "plagued" that area for a long time, so why bother with writing a song about it? There are far more pressing issues in this world that need addressing. Knife In The Leg remind me of Sista Sekunden, with their tuneful hardcore and vocal delivery. "New City Looks" is a scorcher. Fast and relentless. While KITL are good, their lyrical matter tends to stick close to critiques of punk. I find that sort of stuff too easy. Where's the real protest when all you can do is fight amongst yourselves? If you're doing a record, you should make every inch of that vinyl count. It's like if you have a patch of wet cement. Are you going to take that opportunity and write something like "Death to posers!" or something more relevant and universal like, "Ever feel like killing your boss?" Just to be clear, both bands on here are really good, and I hope to hear more music from them soon. —M.Avrq (Inimical, inimical.com)

#### FLAT TIRES / ASOUND, THE: Split: 7"

This is an excellent split of two non-traditional North Carolina punk bands. The Asound has a classic rock and psychedelic influence that might be a bit off-putting at first, but their side is

undeniably driving. Even catchier is the Flat Tires side, which is a smoking hot mix of punk and country. Country has been mixed with punk with varying degrees of success over the years, but Flat Tires strike just the right balance of twang and hardcore. Each band delivers two solid tracks of Southern barbecue-able fun. This 7" comes housed in a beautiful sleeve illustrated by ANTISEEN's Jeff Clayton, perhaps the best-known NC punk icon. Needless to say, this record comes highly recommended. —Art Ettinger (Zodiac Killer, zodiackillerrecords.com)

#### FOLDED SHIRT: Self-titled: EP

Tripped out and twisted up punk rock from another reality. Mix Mentally Ill with Chrome and early Sonic Youth and you'll get Folded Shirt. Larry from the Darvocets fronts this group, so you know it's not some typical garbage. Guitar strings are pulled in directions they were not meant to be, bass lines throb and pulse, and the drums sound a little hesitant, oddly enough. "Crazy Eyes" is the best track on here—with the backward running tracks—and the whole warped tone it gives, while "Go crazy eyes" is repeated over and over. When the acid turns bad and everyone else is having fun at your expense. Seems only Cleveland can produce bands as good as this. —M.Avrq (Fashionable Idiots, tchardcorejournal.com)

#### FUCKING COPS, THE: Demo: CD-R

I so wanted this to suck. I was going to go all Spinal Tap on this demo and write

a brilliant two word review. Under the title of the CD it was just going to read "Fucking sucks." Sigh... seems things never work out for me, because this is really pretty good. It reminded me in parts of the Gibbons, except with way better guitar playing. The songs are all catchy and rock in all the right ways. Maybe I can salvage my two word review: Fucking awesome! Check these guys out. —Ryan Horky (Big Purple, bigpurplerecords.com)

#### GERM ATTACK: Cruxshadow: LP

Has this band matured? Their previous releases sounded more in the vein of early Disorder meets Chaos UK. The sound was primarily a raw buzzsaw affair. The current sound is reminiscent of UK82 bands like GBH, Exploited, and the Partisans. But not like a copy; sounding like they actually came from that time period. Only thing missing would have been the use of heavy reverb on the vocals. That was used quite frequently back then. The songs that are played with a more controlled mid-tempo groove come off more melodic and memorable. Instead of being attacked with a distorted din, the songs have an infectious tone to them that makes you want to put a pint in the air and maybe bring back the pogo. I'm really impressed with the growth of this band. Fifteen songs that got repeated listens and deserved the time spent on the turntable. —Donofthedeat (Loud Punk)

#### GERM ATTACK: Death to Cops: EP

I was under the impression these guys were some shitty crust punk band. Was I ever wrong! Instead, this Canadian outfit are U.K.-inspired punk, similar to the No Future bands: driving and catchy at the same time. The tribal drum beat is effective in propelling the songs forward at a decent pace. The guitar sound is thick and somewhat clean, while the vocals have a raspy edge, while still being clear and effective. Lyrically, they're mainly anti-cop, and all-over anti-system. The most interesting song is "Siege," which starts the record off. Urgent and direct, with lyrics about how the state has gone after people and movements that it has seen as a threat, or presented to the populace as a threat. A few incidents mentioned are Waco, TX, Ruby Ridge, Rainbow Farm, and M.O.V.E. A solid record the whole way through. Glad I picked this up. —M.Avrq (Loud Punk)

#### GESTAPO KHAZI: Self-titled: LP

These guys sound like they're well versed in a lotta different strains of noise—late period L.A./early suburban art-punk, post-punk, even Morricone-influenced surf rock. The result is music that can hold its own on a bill with, say, TSOL or 100 Flowers, yet is much more sophisticated than those who usually pooh-pooh punk think is possible. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dead Beat)

#### GET RAD: I Can Always Live: CD

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playing shows with Frontside Five. I swear that just listening to this flipped the brim up on my hat and made me run around in circles. They have a song about pizza too! My only complaint here is that I had a hell of a time trying to read the song titles, thanks to the stupid font on the back. Small potatoes compared to how great this disc is. —Ty Stranglehold (Hyperrealist)

#### GG KING: *Babbling Voices*: 7" EP

Bands can get like families. You're brothers. You're related. But you may hate your fuckin' brothers. I know nothing of the interior dynamic that fueled Atlanta's Carbonas or what lead to their breakup. All I know is that when the Carbonas called it quits, Gentleman Jesse released a fuckin' great, neatly-dressed full-length and GG King—drummer then, guitarist now—has released a string of notable 7"s, this being one of them. Musically, it's cool to retroactively hear how Jesse's smart pop (think Peter Case not Peter Dinklage) locked into GG's dirty, angular minimalism (think Urinals not Ikea). This is some extremely solid, worn-denim stuff, reminiscent of early Reatards: arrested development, slightly paranoid, screechy and chummy, and with an undeniable garden of nutritious hooks right under broken, sandpapery surface. —Todd (Local Cross)

#### GOD EQUALS GENOCIDE / NO PEOPLE: *Split*: 7"

Razorcake has some unwritten codes (there's no book), things we think are

common sense and DIY-moral. One of them is that if we have a hand in releasing a record, we won't review it in these pages or on our website. It's like, no shit, we like the band's music. Why else would we release it? Well, GEG is one of my favorite bands. They happen to live ten blocks away from Razorcake and fit perfectly into our mission of celebrating local DIY without ignoring national and international punk. We've had our hand in releasing four of GEG's previous 7"s. I couldn't be happier. I just couldn't comment on the band before this record without feeling slimy. My grandfather was a huge fan of musicals. He was a tough ex-Navy man then a tough ex-bill collector. He loved musicals. Julie Andrews got top billing. So did *Pirates of Penzance*. GEG embody that sort of tough sweetness of my grandfather. They're fully aware of the ugliness that resides in the world, but they chose to surround themselves by a ragtag, engaging beauty that comforts them. They do this without being dogmatic; with an undeniable cheer. Think Bananas, Allergic To Bullshit, and in honor of my grandfather, *The Sound of Music*. No People: From Tokyo, Japan would fit well in San Pedro, California, especially with Underground Railroad To Candyland. Slithery, stealthy DIY pop gems (lots of keyboards) that are handled expertly, in a no-fuss, non-flashy, let's-party way. Great pairing. Great split. —Todd (Underground Government, undergroundgovernment.com / Recess Japan, recessjapan.com)

#### GOVERNMENT ISSUE: *Joy Ride*: LP

Cool that Dr. Strange is doing vinyl reissues of this stuff. Originally released on Fountain Of Youth in 1984, this was/is GI's second LP. From what I could glean about this reissue, this is the European version with extra songs. For some reason I never picked this up when it originally came out. I've always liked these guys, even when the sound started to shift on the later records, which was the stuff I found I listened to the most. However, I don't think this LP is entirely solid. There's some filler on here, like the cover of "These Boots Were Made for Walkin'," and the live tracks. Not to mention the pacing, which seems disjointed. That said, this does have songs like "Understand," "Notch in My Crotch," and "Joy Ride" which are great songs where they were transitioning from thrashy and raw to something more tuneful. —M.Avg (Dr. Strange, drstrange.com)

#### GRANT HART: *Hot Wax*: CD

First new record in quite some time for the ex-Hüsker Dü songwriter/drummer. It's consistently a stripped-down affair, so don't expect a blistering onslaught like his former trio. "You're the Reflection of the Moon on the Water" features mysterious lyrics that help the song flow with precision. Grant is a storyteller, so that's why out of nine songs there are three with names in the titles on this record. "School Buses Are for Children" features a wistful chorus: "school buses are for children/they need someone who wants them." This song

will end up really grabbing you by the end. "My Regrets" throttles the motor a bit, but by the time it is over, so is this record. There's no "2541" here, but it's still a captivating record that creates a somber mood which you'll find hard to shake. —Sean Koeppenick (MVD Audio)

#### GYPSY: *Self-titled*: 4-song CDEP

Is there a computer chip installed in my back—like those that keep track of pets—but for a total predisposition for catchy, underdog DIY punk? What the fuck? Gypsy's a beautiful, unshowered, beat-up mess of a band. Vagabond Ryan Maddox, drummer of the Hidden Spots (also of Queerwulf and True Stereo) found himself in Las Cruces for a month. Instead of getting a honky bullshit job, he settled in with the natives, skated ditches, smoked a lot, and—I'm sure with little prompting—got Chris Mason (Shang-a-Lang) and Joe Ayoub (Marked Men) along for the ride to record at The Trainyard, an all-ages spot. Low-fi, linty, mismatched sock-y, disheveled life of questionable decisions DIY punk that totally hits the mark it was going for. This is the opposite of whatever's being played over the in-house speakers at Guitar Center right this second. —Todd (Dirt Cult)

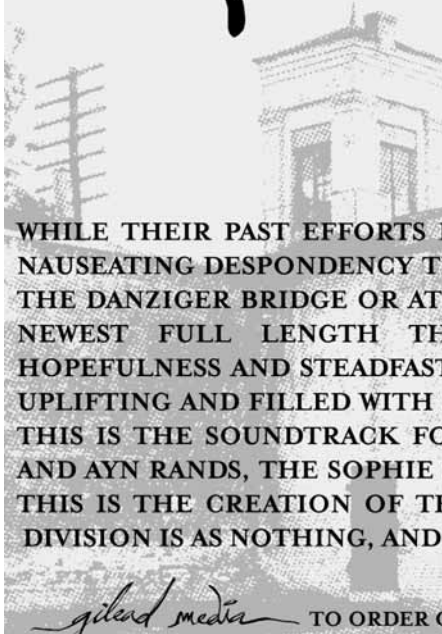
#### HALF RATS, THE: *"For the Sake of Love" b/w "The Girl"*: 7"

This is more of that "new old" I like so much. I imagine I am about to become saturated with it, but I like the sound of The Half Rats. Good songwriting without irony. Both songs are a fusion


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of '50s pop sensibilities with low-distortion and power pop riffs dropped in. The recording is lo-fi, but done in a way that leaves room for craft instead of just "being lo-fi." Good songs, executed well. —Billups Allen (Douchemaster)

#### HAMBURGER HELP ME: *Awesome Garys E.P.: 7"*

Twin Cities slop hardcore featuring members of the Fuck Yeahs, Chooglin', and Sweet J.A.P. When it comes to song titling, these guys are fucking not notch with songs like "Heavy Metal Unicorn," "Sex Jacket," "Dog with Ham," "Boner," and "Sausage Horse." As far as writing punk rock that I want to listen to repeatedly while lounging at home, not so much. This largely stems from the fact that there are twenty-two songs on this ten minute long 7", which leaves most it sounding like random thrash snippets. However, it does speak even more highly of their song titling excellence because they have to come up with a fuckton of titles. They "sell out" on a couple songs that are over thirty seconds and have some pop hooks like "Female Fonzie," which I like a lot. The day I first listened to the record, I saw Hamburger Help Me at a bar in Minneapolis and, to be fair, I appreciated what they were going for much more in a live setting than this E.P. —Jake Shut (Fart)

#### HANNA HIRSCH: *Tala Svart: LP*

Finally available on vinyl, this record is an ice princess amongst snow mutants. Siri has such a powerful, pleasant voice

while Anders, Johan, Lars, and Andy crank out the Scandi-rock. Imagine El Bando, The Assassinator, or La Fraction filtered through some Swedish sensibility and served up with some non-intrusive keyboard. Beautiful, both in sound and concept. For the last couple years the CD has been in regular rotation around Razorcake HQ, and I can't see it falling out anytime soon. —Daryl (Adagio 830)

#### HARLAN T. BOBO: *Sucker: CD*

"Songs mostly written while courting an adventurous woman. France, Spain, Madagascar, New York, Memphis, Netherlands. The courtship was a success." As an '80s punk rock kid, I pretty much disdained folk, emo, whiny CTV country, emo-folk, and new country. That was until I first heard Hank Williams and Leonard Cohen. They made me realize you can be a singer-songwriter and not be a complete douchebag in boots. The usual labels of country and folk didn't really apply. Americana is the closest word that makes sense. They didn't write and sing in order to get chicks, they wrote songs to try to understand people, themselves included. They never put on a fake look to fit into what was popular. Sometimes it's poetic, other times pissed off. Sometimes it's just funny. Harlan T. Bobo embodies the same vibe. He could be singing in Memphis, or at a New York bar, in a Paris café, or on a street corner in Nogales, and always sound at home, pure and from the heart. —Speedway Randy (Goner)

#### HAUNTED GEORGE:

##### *American Crow: CD*

Hanging from the Halloween garage musical tree of Screaming Jay Hawkins, The Cramps, the early Misfits, the Blowtops—not to mention George's old band, The Necessary Evils, is the powerhouse Haunted George. With a mule's saddle of full-length albums and 7's behind him as a one-man band, I expected a fun record but, frankly, I also expected more of the same. I do love the pedal echoes of the Born Bad vibe, garage rock stomp that somehow makes perfect sense with horror movie memorabilia and pulpy westerns. Just that this is a deep rut that bands can fall in after one good record and end up going in circles. But I was wrong, pardner. Surprisingly fresh, this album kicks ass, real *Deadwood* shit. While this is firmly in George's usual ramblin' style, it feels advanced from earlier records, lots of good, ominous speed and pluckiness mixing in with the thundering herd. I got excited by each song. The way a gunfighter keeps shooting those cans off the fence, getting tighter. Necessary Evil Jimmy Hole now plays with George, which may add to the change in style while taking away the lovability of the loner one-man band. Alas, I do believe the line that George is living and recording out in the Mohave. —Speedway Randy (In The Red)

#### HUNX AND HIS PUNX:

##### *Gay Singles: Cassette*

What if '60s girl groups like the

Crystals and the Ronettes were cross dressers and had Johnny Ramone write all their songs? Aside from the timeframes being completely out of whack, you'd pretty much end up with Hunx And His Punx. Their sound isn't anything incredibly original but the catchiness of the tunes is where the hook meets the mouth. Song themes are mostly about cute boys and heartbreak. Or cute boys and the hearts they break. This was originally released by True Panther Sounds on CD and LP and is great for the tape deck in your car but if you come across it, get the LP for the gratuitous nude picture of our boy Hunx in all his full-frontal glory. —Juan Espinosa (Burger)

#### I'M DIET: *This Hammer Destroys Ignorance: Mini-CD*

Bad grindcore sounds like rocks in a blender and the Cookie Monster yelling at you like he just stubbed his toe. Good grindcore sounds like bones in a blender, pulverized to a dust that your not-smart friends would snort like a line of coke. I'm Diet—four mystery-shrouded longtime L.A. punks—is good grindcore. They clock in two Descendents covers, totaling seven seconds. Comes in an origami package designed by a rocket scientist. —Todd (Self-released)

#### ICE NINE: *Nobody's Son: EP*

One of those "wha?!" moments. Didn't know these guys were playing music again. If I remember correctly, they did a split with Charles Bronson.

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Ice Nine originally existed in the 1990s and were a definite product of that time. The songs are super technical, loud and noisy, disjointed, and, ultimately, tuneless, which is the downfall of any band like this. Not one song on this record is memorable. Too much time is spent noodling with time changes, running up and down the fret board, and a vocalist who is looking for power and brutality in screaming and growling as loud as possible. A lot is going on and nothing is focused. A few listens gets tedious. —M.Avrq (Prank)

#### IMPERIAL CAN: *Hey Fuckers: CD*

This band is an electric punk combo featuring Chris Clavin from Ghost Mice. I mostly mention this because I'm not a big fan of Ghost Mice, which tends to sound too "precious" for me, but I like this band pretty alright. It's real raggedy pop punk like Crimpshrine, but with a high-pitched singer and endearingly thumpy drums. Most of the stuff on here has a pretty distinct DIY punk message, with the exception of "Rabb-napping," which is in that too-cutesy Ghost Mice vein. There are a couple of lines in this album that really make me go "Huh?" though. Specifically in "New Wave," where in reference to what's wrong with punks today, "It's not worth the risk to steal things, the pizzas they eat come by delivery." Getting a pizza delivered may be the most strident definition of what selling-out is. I mean, living by shoplifting is great if you're doing it at Wal-Mart and only have some really low maintenance needs for yourself, but beyond that, I think

that system of pseudo-off-the-grid living breaks down real quick like. It's the kind of almost painfully myopic thinking that I think causes a lot of crusties and such to not really be taken all that seriously. Propagandhi and Fugazi talk a big game, but they also seem relatable and living in the real world. It's not that these bands, and others like them (Fifteen and both Subhumans come to mind), are about compromising the shit out of everything, but they do recognize that everything is not always so cut and dry. I dunno if I can say the same for this band. It seems a lot of this line of severe "leeching off the system, but not in any way admitting to being a part of the system" thinking only really works for someone who lives in an anarchist wonderland where interconnectedness and consequences are non-existent outside of bike and vegetable co-ops. Then again, maybe I'm just being defensive and cynical, because indeed I have (gasp!) partaken in non-dumpstered pizza. I still approve of this album though. —Adrian (Plan-It-X)

#### INDEPENDENT PROGRESS:

##### *Anthems of Truth: CD*

On one hand, I can understand how *Anthems of Truth* could be considered relatively standard fare, maybe even a smidge generic. They bring to mind some of the bands on the recently defunct PunkCore label or maybe even the gruffer, earlier material in the Dropkick Murphys catalog: streetpunk with a smidge of ska thrown into the mix. Gravel-packed vocals and lots of gang backups. On first listen, it didn't

come across as terribly memorable. On the other hand, there are moments where Independent Progress really shines—and it's buried there in repetition, in giving it another shot. The biggest detriment to the streetpunk genre has always been the dipshit thug/gang mentality, how it's often lyrically tantamount to a bunch of fucking bullies running around with guitars. Thankfully, none of that is present here. Honestly, the lyrics here are top-notch; well-spoken and articulate stuff that's terrific on its own and absolutely jaw-dropping for the genre. It's that intelligence, coupled with the fact that these dudes sound like they're having a blast playing these songs, that carries this thing forward. The wheel isn't necessarily being reinvented here, but that's not really necessary. This is more than a passing nod—at least to this listener—to bands like the Strike and the Beltones, and that's good enough for me. Genuine stuff. —Keith Rosson (Independent Progress)

#### INJ/SYS: *Spoken Word: 7" EP*

INJ/SYS, I guess, is shorthand for Injustice System. What I am certain of, however, is that this record is pretty damn good. Blazing early '80s style East Coast hardcore in the vein of Antidote, Abused (both bands get the cover treatment here), YDI, etc. Raw, bare bones, no frills. Just a loud and blistering guitar sound, thrashing drums, and some low end to keep it all together. The vocals are yelled and delivered with some snarl, desperation, and urgency. This is the sort of stuff I

think about when I think of what a good hardcore band is supposed to sound like. Fast, distorted, and pissed off are a few of the qualities I look for, and these folks have 'em in spades. Listen to the very last tracks, "A Colony Civilized," with its fast and reckless approach, then capped off with the short "No Words." Then go back and listen to the rest of the record. Can we expect more from these guys? Only three hundred were pressed, so jump on it! —M.Avrq (No Reprieve, noreprieve.bigcartel.com)

#### INSTINCT OF SURVIVAL:

##### *North of Nowhere... LP*

I've been a bit of a burnout lately listening to crust. At least the crust records I personally own. I do really like to go see it live, though. But when I get something new that is well done, it gets me re-interested again. This band hailing from Germany does all the right things in my book. Really strong production to support their Deviated Instinct meets Amebix with death metal undertones mania. Really riveting guitar riffs pierce through the mix, backed by sold bass and drum interplay. Vocals that aren't too guttural finish their bleak painting of life. The band really toes the line between punk and metal. They have the musicianship and songwriting ability to cross over that line and play just metal, depending on the genre. Overall, the metal in me really enjoys what is being heard and the punk side is satisfied that it's on the same team. The record nerd underbelly in



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me loves the gatefold and the super cool purple and black swirled vinyl!! —Donofthedeat (World Funeral)

# **INTEGRITY: *The Blackest Curse*: CD**

It's been some time that I've been waiting for this album. What I consider the last proper Integrity album, the absolute masterpiece *Seasons in the Size of Days*, was released in 1997, and while *Integrity 2000, To Die For*, various 7"s and reissues (and scores of lesser bands paying homage) did well enough to partially fill the void left in their recurring absence, not until now have we been graced with a fully realized Integrity release. At this point, it's far too early to determine where *The Blackest Curse* stands among Integrity's previous LPs, but it's very safe to say that I am far from disappointed. There is a particular vibe that culminated with *Seasons* that I felt was lacking in each release between it and this new one. A bleakness and desperation that was absolutely oozing from *Seasons*, *Tomorrow*, and *Humanity* (and to a somewhat lesser extent *Systems*), but brothers and sisters... that darkness is back. There is a completeness to *The Blackest Curse*, a continuation and a realization of a dark, twisted vision and heavy, evil sound that Dwid and company essentially brought to the genre with that first LP some twenty-two years ago. Whether a starting point for new listeners or, like myself, an indescribably welcome return to form, *The Blackest Curse* is on par with Integrity's finest hours and has quite possibly set the

bar unreachably high for "hardcore record of the year"... or decade... or millennium. Fucking incredible. —Dave Williams (Deathwish)

# **LAST LAUGH: *Disarray*: CD-R**

Only two of these eight songs make it past the one-minute mark. Think Gloom Records, 625, Nate Wilson's wildly pessimistic reviews, vocals belched into garbage cans. Think of the Reagan SS/John Brown's Army split 7", blank CD-Rs and Xeroxed inserts. Think shit-tons of youthful exuberance and pixilated splatter fonts. Frayed as hell and totally furious and over before you know it. —Keith Rosson (Last Laugh)

# **LEGENDARY SHACK SHAKERS:**

## ***Agri-Dustrial*: CD**

The sonic equivalent of taking a wild ride through the Appalachian mountains with someone hopped up on some serious uppers and channeling the ghosts of the Reverend Horton Heat, Cesar Rosas, and Top Jimmy And The Rhythm Pigs. The production is almost too clean, given the grungy hillbilly-fueled mania the band puts down, but they quite aptly turn heads, and whoever's blowin' harp for 'em is seriously hot shit. —Jimmy Alvarado (Colonel Knowledge)

# **LIBYANS: "Paralyzed"/"Keep Waiting": One-sided 7"**

Without a doubt these are my favorite songs since their debut *Welcome to the Neighborhood* EP, and I would consider myself a fan of everything in between. The Libyans have this knack for tapping

into the geekiest aspects of arty record packaging and the most fist-pumping, captivating aspects of hardcore punk. These are the kinds of records that make you believe in the fountain of youth. Cracking the seal and plopping this record on can make you feel like you don't know shit and you wanna learn everything. —Daryl (Self-released, thelibyans@gmail.com)

# **LOGNHALSMOTTAGNINGEN:**

## ***Fina Nyanser I Nya Finanser*: 7"EP**

Huh. Weird. Totally Killed By Death, obscure, tinny, rushed, snotty, "sounds like the early '80s" recording of what reasonably could have been a contemporary of Swedish punk/hardcore in line with Ebba Grön or Missbrukarna. But, with some poking around, it's a dude from Flagstaff, Arizona collaborating with a Swede from Göteborg. They formed the songs by phone then made a recording. It almost seems like a hoax or a fun transnational project. You pick. It may be both. The title? It translates into "Subtle Shading in New Finances." The band name? "Liar Entertainment." —Todd (Local Cross)

# **LOVELY LADS: *The Best You've Got*: CD**

Released nearly five years back, this brutal release of Boston hardcore-influenced oi is a barrel of fun for the wax head in your life. It's remarkably campy, bouncy punk that's one part newish oi, one part 1980s hardcore tribute. The very simple recording suits the aesthetic well. There are some truly remarkable off-key backing vocals that are some of the finest

specimens of their type. If alien scientists land on earth to examine discordant punk harmonizing, Lovely Lads will be in their first dozen or so Petri dishes. Now go Nair your head and have some fun. —Art Ettinger (Eating Rats, eatingrats.com)

# **LUMBER LUNG: *Demo 2010*: CD**

A five-song demo from a Santa Barbara band that reminds me of the most artiest and no wave portions of the Dischord Records catalog. Female lead vocals with a shouted secondary male counterpoint makes for some interesting interactions. However, I could see the occasionally tuneless lead vocals getting to be a bit grating upon repeated listenings. The songs themselves are above average and equal parts epic, melancholy, and chaotic. —Jake Shut (Self-released)

# **MANDROIDS:**

## ***First Fabulous Issue*: 7" EP**

Beats me, it's kinda hard to imagine why a band would call themselves "The Mandroids" and then not title their record "*BEHOLD THE MANDROIDS!*" like the story in *Avengers* #94 which first introduced the Mandroids. It's even harder to understand why they would sing a song about those perpetual enemies of S.H.I.E.L.D., Hydra ("Fail Hydra"), then title a song "Them!" and have said song NOT be about those other perpetual enemies of S.H.I.E.L.D., A.I.M. ((Advanced Idea Mechanics)), who were initially called "Them!" in the issues of *Tales of Suspense* in

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which they made their debut. These seven songs span the gamut of the human topical experience—covering both comic books AND plastic bags—even venturing into politics, after a fashion (“Don’t Vote”)—but i somehow get the feeling that if these guys were ever tapped to play the band in the surely-soon-to-be major motion picture *The Adrenalin O.D. Story*, there’d probably be some griping amongst the AOD faithful. BEST SONG: “Don’t Vote” BEST SONG TITLE: “Fail Hydra” FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Wikipedia once had Hydra’s debut erroneously listed as being in *Strange Tales* #134—it was none other than the present author who corrected it to *Strange Tales* #135. —Rev. Nørb (Mandroids)

**MASAOKA, CHEN, GRÜSEL, NAGAI:**  
**Self-titled: CD**

Listening to what is essentially improvised music recorded the first time the four performers got together, one’s opinion of such will probably fall into one of two categories: 1) these people are friggin’ geniuses, 2) these people are friggin’ kooks. While this reviewer can appreciate the thought process behind the latter, he finds himself leaning a bit more towards the former. It’s no small feat to sit down with three other people and create something interesting to listen to, let alone pull it wholly out of thin air, and keep it consistently interesting for well over an hour. Utilizing traditional Japanese

instruments, voices, a cello, and “electronics” they create soundscapes that vacillate between “music” and full-on aural assaults. It’s often within the context of a single piece—quiet, contemplative koto and/or cello passages coupled with electronic slurs, blurps, and blurts, scraping strings, and slide into avalanche of noise. This is decidedly not something to plop on the ol’ hi-fi during yer next barbecue—though that’s exactly what I’m a-gonna do, being the sadistic bastard I am—but definitely worth the trouble if you’re in the mood to experience, rather than merely consume, some music that resides well off the beaten path. —Jimmy Alvarado (Resipiscient)

**MCRACKINS: Live from Thunderbird Radio Hell: CD**

I’d heard of this band a while back, but never checked them out, on account that they’d compared themselves to J Church, which got a “Yeah, right” eye roll from me. But, if Nardwuar speaks that highly of someone, I’ll give them another shot. Apparently, this is a live session from CiTR, with a bunch of covers thrown in. Musically, it’s pretty—fast pop punk from guys who can clearly play the hell out of their instruments always wins with me. I only have two—or really one-and-a-half—complaints: First, the shtick (they dress up like two eggs and a dog). As someone who’s been in not one, but multiple shtick bands, I don’t hate it, but, in this case, it gets pointed out again and again. It’s such a crazy

idea, that I think it’d make me laugh to no end if it was just never pointed out (would the Coneheads have worked if everyone they met immediately said, “Dude, what’s with your heads?”), aside from the occasional “cracking under pressure,” etc. metaphor. But that leads me to my other complaint, which is that there’s a shit ton of goofy-as-hell banter. Again, I love me some funny banter, but a lot of it’s just so self-deprecating (again, love that too), that I just want to say “You guys can play the hell out of those songs. Just OWN it already.” —Joe Evans III (Killer)

**MIND SPIDERS: 4-song 7” EP**

Mark Ryan is probably most well known for being in the Marked Men, and is undoubtedly a large part of that band’s fascinating chemical reaction. He’s also been a long runner in the you-should-check-them-out High Tension Wires and was a one-time Riverboat Gamblers guitarist. This collection of four songs showcases a slightly less frenetic Mark, peeling apart songs, letting them spool out, and then drenching them in an almost wet layer of sonics. Sick with hooks and natural-sounding (for some reason, I keep picturing highly polished wood grain), there’s a sheen to these songs (which Mark recorded himself, I believe), but it’s there to highlight and bring out some lustrous, subtle textures that’d be lost if the production was mindlessly scuffed, forced, and agitated “to be more ‘punk’.” Great stuff. —Todd (Dirtnap)

**MIND SPIDERS: World Destroyed: 7”**

Another cool band that I got to see in Texas and I picked up the record. Well, by seeing them, I was wedged in the doorway of a sweltering record store on a very hot Austin afternoon with a lot of beer to keep me sane. Come to think of it, I actually couldn’t see them, but it sounded great. Mind Spiders are like a slightly slowed down Marked Men with a hefty dose of Beach Boys or Ronnettes and a little Pixies thrown into the mix. The Marked Men reference makes sense, as the leader of this unit is Mark Ryan of Marked Men. A little fuzz and keyboards are thrown in to give it a few more layers and it all makes for a fun, relaxing, and downright enjoyable record. Can’t wait for more. —Ty Stranglehold (Dirtnap)

**MISERY INDEX: Heirs to Thievery: CD**

Coming on the heels of their amazing album *Traitors*, Misery Index arrives with their eleven-song, thirty-four minute long album, *Heirs to Thievery*. Frankly, trying to top their last work was probably asking too much. The grind metal stylings proved to be almost catchy at times on *Traitors*, so the question had to be asked: which direction would the band go this time? Would it be into something with more of a groove or perhaps mixing more hardcore elements? Well, the band hasn’t done either. Instead, they went the total opposite direction and actually got heavier and more brutal. This is a full-on grind album with copious amounts of blast beats to prove it. But

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somewhere along the way they lost me. The production is better, sure, but any hooks (yes, there can be hooks, even in grind metal) seem to have been abandoned in favor of punishing the listener with aggressive guitars that don't let up. While that may sound good to many fans of grind—and metal in general—there's something that just doesn't resonate with me like *Traitors* did. There's nothing for me to latch onto and yell along with, although there does seem to still be some good political lyrics coming from these guys. In the end, *Heirs to Thievery* seems to be lacking the breakdowns and hooks. Instead, what you get is a pummeling barrage of music that leaves you impressed but indifferent. —Kurt Morris (Relapse)

**MODERN ACTION: "Modern Action" b/w "Bleeding Red": 7"**

If you can put an exact scientific quantifier as to why bands like this ((whatever "like this" means)) sound immediately identifiable as being from southern California and nowhere but, i'd like to get my hands on your data. I can only guess that their mothers were frightened by the "Somebody Got Their Head Kicked In" comp LP whilst they were in the womb, because this band sounds so much like the bands on that record that if i were to go and look at the album cover today, i'd only be half-agog if i saw a Pushead character wearing a Modern Action t-shirt staring back outta the mosh pit at me. Snappy melodies and eighth-note cymbal rhythms aside, somebody might wish to take these lads

aside and inform them that a chorus consisting solely of your band's name repeated twenty times in a row ((the phrase "Modern Action" is uttered sixty-four times total in the song)) is rarely considered a particularly sterling bulwark of creativity. Then again, i'm always up for anything that makes me feel like it's summer/fall '82 again, so thanks for that, if nothing else. **BEST SONG:** "Modern Action" **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Modern Action" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** "Modern Action" —Rev. Nørb (Modern Action) (...how did i not see THAT coming?)

**MOTHER'S CHILDREN: That's Who!: LP**

Hey current Ottawa punk rock scene: you've done it yet again. About a year ago there were like a thousand new bands in this town, most of them good, if not great. Inevitably, some of them turned out to be summer romances or slightly longer flings, but others stuck—long-term polygamous relationships based on boozing, power-pop, biking, hardcore, and pizza. I consider myself incredibly lucky to be part of a community that continues to flourish and gain recognition, and one of Ottawa's best exports, Mother's Children, have just churned out one hell of an LP for Deranged Records. As first evidenced on last year's *Dance to the Rock N Roll Band* EP on Going Gaga, these four fellows (whose current and previous affiliations include Year Zero, Million Dollar Marxists, the Sick Fits, Cloven Hoofs, and a handful of others) have the goods required to pen some

of the most memorable power-pop-rock-n-roll songs this side of the first Any Trouble LP, infused with a proto-punk/glam snottiness and energy that sets them well apart from the legions of copycats currently huddling under the power pop banner. It's easy to shrug this kinda stuff off these days, but regardless of musical preference, give this a spin and a good listen. You won't regret it. —Dave Williams (Deranged)

**MOUTH SEWN SHUT: 2009: LP**

If you are in a hardcore band and you are considering adding reggae to your repertoire (or even considering it as an influence) you need to ask yourself a question: "Are we the Bad Brains?" If you are the Bad Brains, proceed, just not too much. If you are not the Bad Brains, stop right there. You aren't the Bad Brains, and will thus inevitably fuck this up. Just stay hardcore. Unfortunately, no one in Mouth Sewn Shut asked themselves this question, and they have several really laughably bad attempts at reggae on this LP. The non-reggae songs are relatively decent crusty hardcore about the usual crusty hardcore subjects. The singer sounds like Barney Greenway a little bit, so extra points for that. But seriously, cut the reggae. —Ryan Horky (Rodent Popsicle)

**MOUTH SEWN SHUT: 2009: LP**

Not to toot my own horn but me and OldHCDude got pictures inside the gatefold of this record! Woohoo! I always get soft and goopy when people want to use my work. Now that I'm all

stoked, seeing the cool splattered milky yellow and black vinyl just brought me up a notch. Anticipation is high now to hear what comes pouring out of the speakers. Not disappointed. A band that never let me down live and this recording sounds to be the best I have heard from them. A big fan of good production, this one is forceful with the best of them. I even really like that the ska and reggae numbers have equal energy to their punk ones. Par for their course, vocals are power-driven with angered output that East Coasters seem deliver with regularity. Bass guitar is prominent in the mix, driving the low down notes up front while the drums provide the chest-thumping drive. The crisp distortion from the guitar keeps the aggro level up. Have to say, this is the best output I have heard to date. Thanks for using my pictures! —Donofthedeath (Rodent Popsicle)

**MULLENS, THE: It's Hard to Imagine...: CD**

There's a definite reliance on mid-'60s rock in evidence here, but discerning listeners can also pick out snatches of Bowie and Dolls influence buried in there amidst the Love, Kinks, and Strawberry Alarm Clock. The recording is clear, the production clean, and careful to avoid the now-hackneyed "budget rock" production values, which has never really gone well for the untold millions of bands who've incorporated it without truly *getting* it. —Jimmy Alvarado (Get Hip)

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**NERVE CITY: Self-titled: 7" EP****NERVE CITY: Self-titled: LP**

Primal, woozy, thumpy, reverberated stuff. Had The Jesus And Mary Chain been even more influenced by the Velvet Underground and laid off the feedback a bit when they started out, they probably would've sounded something like this. The seven-inch on Hozac goes one further by shoving the band into a cardboard box that they subsequently drop into the deep end of the pool and hit record. —Jimmy Alvarado (Hozac / Sweet Rot)

**CRUSADERS OF LOVE:****Never Grow Up: LP**

I'm starting to think Douchemaster has a direct line to my brain's deepest punk rock desires. Part of a distinguished list of releases including the White Wires and the Black And Whites, Bryan Rackley and Co. have once again unleashed a pitch-fucking-perfect LP. This record does catchy self-destructive love with a clean (but not sterile) sound echoing early '80s pop punk. Maybe it's something in the water, but these delightful Frenchmen have a sound so enthralling, myself and my two roommates have this record on the list of "you're not allowed to play it three times in a row." One song sounds like a heartbreak anthem from the 1950s! Basically, this record is a fucking good time, even if in the songs, the narrator isn't having one. Can't wait to see them live. —Samantha Beerhouse (Douchemaster)

**OFFENDERS: Anthology 1981-1985: CD**

Sweden's Just 4 Fun released this anthology of a semi random bunch of Offenders material as a tribute to the late Mikey "Offender" Donaldson, whose untimely death in 2007 shook the underground. Besides being one of the founding members of the Offenders, Donaldson also played on classic releases by D.R.I. and MDC. The only times I got to see Donaldson live were when MDC did their rare, "all original members" shows a few years back. Offenders remains a grossly underappreciated early hardcore band, one of the first to play the super fast styles that became so prominent as the 1980s scorched by. There are some really strange lead guitar riffs on some of these tracks that are as dated as the meat products in the local grocery store I declared never to return to, but, overall, these tracks hold up very well. Easily as catchy and potent as much better known bands, Offenders deserve their place in hardcore history. —Art Ettinger (Just 4 Fun, j4f.dk)

**PIGS: Illuminati House Party: LP**

Heavy stuff here. But it's not all doom and thud. This is a good mix of straight-up rock, with songs like "Population Control" and "Hard Lovin' Van," and then they give you stuff like "The Call," which is in the realm of Sabbath and Sleep. But the crème de la crème is the Sabbath-inspired riff godhead "Lurch," which is so undeniably good it requires a couple more listens before moving on to the next song. Then you get the

epic "Taser Trilogy," which is, as the title suggests, a three-part instrumental jam. At points this stuff reminds me of mid- to late-'80s SST output: jam heavy and out of left field. Would love to see these guys live. This record comes packaged in a foldout, two-color screen printed cover, along with a CD-R of the album to listen to in the car. Fuck yeah! —M.Avrq (Sugar Mountain, sugarmountain@gmail.com)

**PIÑATA PROTEST: Plethora: CD**

Ranchero punk! Or maybe Norteño punk... possibly cumbia punk? I probably would have to ask my parents to be sure. Either way, this is awesome. Probably one of the best party albums I've heard in a long while. Also, this finally fulfills my longstanding wish of hearing a band do something like this, with the extra plus that it doesn't suck. In fact, quite the opposite. Get a fast punk band, add an accordion, get them to do polkas ("Polka Time") and some ballads ("Love Taco") and a taste for Tex-Mex music, and you have this band. That sounds like a recipe for a novelty disaster, and in the hands of a lesser band it might be, but these guys pull it off. "Cantina" and "Campesino" are some rippers that could start off both a rowdy backyard BBQ full of either punk rockers or my extended family from New Mexico. The mix of good ol' anarcho style Spanish and English lyrics in the mix on songs like "Suckcess" and "Maquilapolis" is a nice touch tambien. Also, the title of the album has to be a reference to *Three Amigos* and who

didn't like that movie? This gets thumbs up all around and my seal of approval. —Adrian (Saustex, saustexmedia.com)

**PISTOL WHIP: Terminal: CD/DVD**

Smog Veil unleashes some killer Erie, PA punk from 1977 and '78! This band is incredible, coming on like a great combination of the Dictators and Radio Birdman. There is a lot of that hard rock turning into punk sound to be found here, and that is some of my favorite stuff of all time. Fans of Nervous Eaters would find a whole lot to like here, although this band has a dash of that Australian dark sound that seems to inform so many of the Oz bands. The DVD has some footage shot on 8mm from way back when, as well. I am so glad to hear some more of this proto-punk style stuff and having studio recordings instead of crummy-sounding live recordings just make it all the better. This is simply an essential reissue for anyone who is a fan of the rockin' punk end of the spectrum. —Mike Frame (Smog Veil)

**POPITLOPITILUS: Self-titled: 7" EP**

Oddball hardcore that swings all over the map—hyper-thrash one second, Cowsy noise rock the next—then on to tunes about terror gnomes and having lasers for eyes. —Jimmy Alvarado (Stank House)

**POTENTIAL JOHNS: "Can I Really Not Go with You" b/w "Past Due": 7"**

I've been a big fan of counting small blessings lately; carrying around

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things that are precious to me. Most of those precious things can't be held in my hands. They're tucked inside. Friendships. Lines from books. Chords from songs. Lyrics. Memories of live shows. These are the inoculations against overwhelming darkness and cynicism. Jeff Burke—the one man behind all of the Potential Johns in the studio, and one quarter of The Marked Men—we're fortunate to have him on our side of music. It does no one any good to say that he's a genius, a savior, or a voice of a generation. (Geniuses usually go batshit crazy, saviors get crucified, and voices of a generation have a way of becoming douchebags selling upper class consumables.) But Jeff, undeniably, has a talent of writing and playing songs that are intricate yet simple, punk yet genre-less, personal yet inclusive. Listening to this single spin, and you can almost hear another universe of music opening up. And that's fuckin' dazzling. —Todd (Dirtnap)

**POWERCHORDS, THE:**  
***More than Me: 7"***

The title tune is pure strain power pop, rife with the requisite hooks and occasionally jangly guitars. The flip, "Chemical Girl," is a bit more punky with shades of early Dickies buried in there. Nice little single. —Jimmy Alvarado (Bachelor)

**PREDATOR: Self-titled: 7" EP**

Three tracks of primal thud-punk—simple riffs, monotone vocals, no frills drumming, and a bass that goes blurt-

blurt-blurt. It ain't Joe Satriani, but who seriously wants to hear that kinda mirror-worshipping masturbation-by-guitar anyway? These kids are quite fuckin' effective just the way they are. —Jimmy Alvarado (Robs House)

**PRIZZY PRIZZY PLEASE:**  
***Chroma Cannon: CD***

This is a reference I thought I would never use in *Razorcake*, but for all the world this band sounds to me like Bob Seger. Yes, a harder rocking, artier Bob Seger for sure, but Bob Seger none the less. The reason I say this is because the vocals have the bar rock vibe of something that would be on a classic rock station (In my hometown of Ruidoso it was 101.5, "The Kid"), and the alto sax on most of this album only reinforces that feeling. Some of the tracks like "Large Hadron Collider" and "New Shoes" actually have an alright spacey, party rock thing going on, but, man, I really don't like the saxophone. It keeps making me feel like the song "Katmandu" is getting ready to jump out from behind a shady corner and aurally knee-cap me. —Adrian (Joyful Noise)

**P.R.O.B.L.E.M.S.:**  
***Gotta Get away from You: 7"***

The A-side is a nice bit of driving punk/hardcore, not too fast or slow with a nice riff. B-side's faster and not quite as interesting. —Jimmy Alvarado (Tombstone)

**PROLES!: One Small Step: 7" EP**

PC punk stuff out to learn us about

the injustice, mind control, non-boogieing richies, and the insidious nature of Helvetica. —Jimmy Alvarado (Free To A Good Home)

**PYGMY SHREWS: The Egyptian: CD**

Ahh, dual male and female vocals... For this reviewer, that's almost as good as a cold beer on a hot day. Almost. Well, here it is: the long-awaited first full length from Brooklyn's Shrews. They continue their hardcore noise tirade riding on a melodic surf of dissonance and fuzz. Some I took a shine to are, "Your Party Sucks," which will be the new house party track and "Dead Wrong," which is a spoken word chain of rhetorical questions. *Big Time* is sold out on their myspace, so be sure to snap this up right quick. Recommended. —Kristen K. (Wantage USA)

**RAW POWER:**

***The Reagan Years: CD/DVD***

The first thing I thought when I saw this was: *How much does this thing cost?* Beer City Records is a quality label to begin with and they have really triumphed by making over four records worth of Italy's Raw Power's output in the 1980s available in a DVD box for \$25. Wow! This is such a no-brainer, it is hard to write about. Formed in Poviglio, Italy in 1981, Raw Power play hardcore punk with a hint of rock and roll guitar riffs. As their catalog reaches into the later '80s, the band edges into a more street punk sound a la Broken Bones. Here is the product breakdown: Disc one contains the albums *Screams from*

*the Gutter* (1984) and *After Your Brain* (1986). Disc two contains *Mine to Kill* (1989), *You Are the Victim* (1983) and *the Wop Hour 7"*. Disc three is a DVD containing two live shows. I'm not a huge live DVD kind of guy, but these two shows from '86 and '87 are a nice companion. My neurotic side detests the thought of old band videos rotting in someone's mom's basement, so I get some sort of Hank Hill satisfaction seeing them put to good use. Economy and fundamentals are at the root of this box set. There is an argument that could be made for too much of a good thing, but this band is worth it. Since technology is spoiling people's attitude about the value of music at an alarming rate, the ability to cram more, more, more into a punk rock release should be something of a consolation prize. I really hope this budget box set becomes a model for releasing some lesser-known discographies. Bravo! —Billups Allen (Beer City)

**RAZORHOOF: Self-titled: CD**

Crushing metal that could hold its own with bands like High On Fire, Weedeater, and 16. Thick and chunky guitars and drums, with a vocalist who works perfectly with the sound. He sounds like his voice is blown out to hell and back. They keep the songs moving at a decent pace, but not too fast to sacrifice the pulverizing power of their songs. Seriously, one of the better heavy bands I've heard this year. I imagine they destroy when they play live. Only one hundred of these

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#### REDSKINS: *Epilogue: CD*

Back when I was a kid (well, adolescent, actually) in the '80s, my dad would occasionally bring home albums he'd gotten from the record store next to his work that he thought his punker sons would find interesting. One of these was a Redskins album, and I remember being really put off by the horns and the occasionally '80s pop feel many of the songs had, and of course, the album was summarily ignored past what couldn't have been more than two spins. Listening to this—a collection comprised of their two singles for the CNT label, three demo tracks, one live track, and three tracks from a precursor band, No Swastikas—makes me wish I'd paid just a little more attention to that album. Sure, the horns and occasionally too radio-friendly beats are still there, but what I'd failed to notice all those years ago is that they were pretty goddamned good at what they did. Many times here they deliver the tunes with such intensity that they come off sounding like the Minutemen on a warp-speed meringue binge, melding post-punk with soul, left wing politics, and yes, oi/punk sensibilities. This is some really good stuff here, and I'm wishin' a) it was longer and b) I hadn't been a dope and kept that album so's I could compare this against it. —Jimmy Alvarado ([insurgence.net](http://insurgence.net))

#### SALVATION CITY ROCKERS:

**Self-titled: 2 x LP**

This band brings a lot of different things to the table, and unlike most bands, succeeds in putting forth an album with varying sounds as opposed to varying quality. There's good street punk, some solid oi, and a few tracks smack dab in the vein of the "punkie-reggae party" genre best exemplified by Los Fabulosos Cadillacs' *Rey Azucar* album. The songs are in French, which is great, since that way I can just assume all the lyrics rule. Also, it's a lot easier to read when you are not being distracted by song lyrics you feel somehow embody your trials and tribulations. This is a really solid release from a genre you don't hear very often, so definitely check this out. —Rene Navarro (Joe Pogo)

#### SASS DRAGONS:

**New Kids on the Bong: CD**

The Sass Dragons shouldn't work as a band. Their music's akin to a food fight at a well-stocked buffet. It should be an unholy, sloppy mess. Blues riffs spalook off of Dwarves-chug-alongs. Reggae openings to songs splash onto and stain the carpet of dirty DIY punk. Saxophone intros juicily horn slide down the bib of a doo wop ditty. There are fast-thrown thrashers, indie rockers ("The Tails of Meow-Meow and Fuck-Fuck"), and banjo solos. What holds it together is the glue of absolute glee. The Sass Dragons, instead of being a gross, entire-random-meal-of-unassociated-music-genres-chucked-into-a-blender-in-order-to-

suck-it-through-a-straw-because-we-have-no-identity-of-our-own type band, are like the lead-footed bus drivers of the developmentally challenged bus. They actively encourage the seemingly random outbursts and request that all limbs hang outside the windows while taking the corners so fast that the tires squeal along with you, the listener. Plus, they have a lot of songs about fuckin' and stalking, which just sweetens the pot. Highly recommended. —Todd (Johann's Face)

#### SFTM: *Too Weird to Live: CD*

Full discography release from this North Carolina punk trio that existed from 1999-2005. The CD starts off strong with "Animals" and plows through another twenty-six songs after that. Fans of Fear and Murphy's Law would probably dig this record. Other than an ill-advised ska number and a throwaway instrumental at the end, there is solid material here from start to finish. Don't expect a reunion show though, since one of the members joined ANTISEEN. —Sean Koepenick (Mystery School, [myspace.com/mysteryschoolrecords](http://myspace.com/mysteryschoolrecords))

#### SHANGHAI RIVER: *Binary Code Will Enslave All of Humankind: LP*

Right off the bat, I should disclose that this band contains a *Razorcake* columnist. It really doesn't matter though, because he seems to me like the kind of guy who would rather appreciate honesty than ass kissing. Wooo! Good thing I can do both now because I love this record! It's almost scary how so

many of the songs on this record are situations that I'm dealing with in my life (particularly the ones pertaining to getting old and still playing in bands and partying). The tunes are sloppy and fun (also attributes I've been told describe me). I had a smile on my face the whole time (except on the one about the guy who got trampled at Wal-Mart on Black Friday. That was sad.). Get the record and join the party... At least until you bleed out your butt. Then it's time to stop. —Ty Stranglehold (ADD)

#### SHARP ENDS: *Northern Front: 7"*

**SHARP ENDS: *Crack Trap: 7"***

Lotta sounds over the four tracks on these two discs. "Northern Front" has no shortage of moody gloom in its grooves, bringing to mind Death In June circa *The Guilty Have No Pride*, while its flip bops along with an early Joy Division feel. "Crack Trap" is by far the catchiest tune of the four, with a catchy odd hook and an air of '60s rock to counter the warbly vocals, while "Loaded Hearts" is about as straightforward punk as they get here. Hopin' they're working on a full-length, 'cause it should be a doozy if these two singles are any indication. —Jimmy Alvarado (Mammoth Cave Recording Co./Hozac)

#### SHELLSHAG: *Rumors in Disguise: LP*

Shellshag are wonderful. They're a husband-and-wife duo. Shag stands up when she plays the drums. She has bells strapped on her legs and dances as she drums. Shell plays his guitar directly facing Shag. It's endearing

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to see and hear that their music is primarily created for one another. Beyond casual listening, it's almost impossible to not hear the love they have for one another ringing out from the grooves in the songs. *Rumors in Disguise* is their most cohesive LP to date—which is astonishing because this album is a collection of songs they've been working on for over a decade (only the first song, "1984" was recently written). The sonic stakes in the ground are far-flung and may not sound like they map out a sound musical foundation that will hold considerable weight, but they do. The architectural spaciousness from the best of the Pixies. The playful scampering, pranking, and challenges of Hickey. Feedback laced into pop hooks and the "it's so simple yet so catchy"-ness of Masters Of The Obvious. *Rumors in Disguise* sounds a batch of love songs, both to one another, and to the creation of this music itself. DIY punks' own version of Sonny And Cher (the happy years)? —Todd (Don Giovanni)

#### SIDETRACKED / HUMMINGBIRD OF DEATH: Split: 6"

Sidetracked: Nine tracks on one side of a 6" record? Yup! Trying to soak it up was hard because of having to get up every few minutes to restart the record. Something about the vocalist reminded me of the singer of Deadfall playing in an even faster band. They belt some heavier slow numbers, too, but don't dabble too long before your attention might sway. No-bullshit

fastcore that makes you feel like a seatbelt needs to be secured for the ride. Hummingbird Of Death: Really bummed I didn't make it out to their show recently when they came through. Work has really brought down my energy level lately. Their last release *Show Us the Meaning of Haste* was one of my favorite releases last year. Continuing on from that release, they unleash five new tunes that show that they can bring on the aggression and slap your face so fast that you don't know where the hand came from. I like the dirtiness of their sound that paints no pretty picture. Fast or slow, they do it with concise precision in the same way Magrudergrind pleases my senses. I am a lame douche for not going to see them. By the way, who is that a picture of on my insert? —Donofthedeath (Cowabunga)

#### SINAOLA: Same: 12" EP

Sinaola are an old school throwback to the original emo hardcore sound of the late 1980s / early 1990s. Even though the band hails from Massachusetts, this cryptic, four-song, one-sided 12" EP is on the German label Adagio 830. One side of the vinyl contains the songs, and the other side is etched. Each song builds naturally, with no sense of pretense. It doesn't feel like a tribute to that short-lived sound that permeated the underground briefly and, instead, works on its own. Next time you hear some metal douche complaining about "emo kids," play them this hearty band and set them straight. I want to go back and

fill the holes in my Ebullition collection now. Sinaola is some powerful shit! —Art Ettinger (Adagio 830, adagio830.de)

#### SLUTTY CHURCH CHIXXX: Self-titled: 7"

Given how much of a cultural touchstone "early eighties hardcore" is, was, and perhaps always shall be—at least nominally—in the punk scenes of whatever NOW we happen to inhabit, it absolutely fucking AMAZES me how rarely anyone gets it right. I mean, what was the last good hardcore band, like, ever? *Los Crudos*? *The State*? *Seven Seconds*? *Negative fricking Approach*? Well, what-fucking-ever, the Slutty Church Chixxx knock this thing out of the fucking metaphorical ballpark with a bat that is pure, strong, and one hundred percent cork-free! It's an eight-song 45, which is EXACTLY RIGHT i might add, managing to channel Dez-era Black Flag ("Your Morality"), MDC ("Police Harassment") and first-album Circle Jerks ("Exit 6") in the space of THE FIRST SIDE ALONE! Everything is LOUD and MEAN and FAST and TO THE POINT and, in the interests of consumer service, they've even eliminated the gaps between songs for your listening pleasure. *None can ask fairer than that!* This band rules. May they never release a full-length album ((especially one with a full-color cover)). Amen. BEST SONG: "Exit 6" BEST SONG TITLE: "Minimum Wage, Maximum Rage" i guess. We're not really into song titles here, fucko. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I've been to Huntsville, to watch

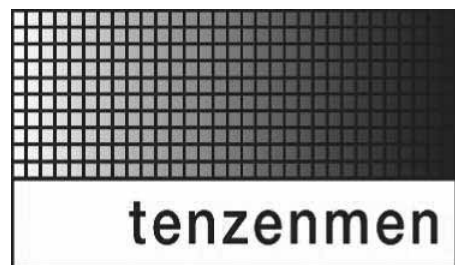
the Brewers double-A affiliate, the Huntsville Stars. Their team has "Faith Night" promotions, where every player wears a jersey number corresponding to a Biblical verse...so you'd think there would have been plenty of Slutty Church Chixxx at the ballpark, but i saw none. —Rev. Nørb (No Profit)

#### SOFY MAJOR: 5 Years of Freaks: CD

Screamo noise that isn't quite black metal, nor doom, but with song titles like "Satan" and "Black Scars," rest assured there's enough juju here to shake a stick at. Spliced sound bites and the occasional drone add versatility to this quartet out of France's first full length. This is an impressive range for a band that's gone through numerous members and put out such little work. Keep yer eye on 'em. Recommended. —Kristen K. (IRAE)

#### SOMETHING FIERCE: "Where Ya Goin Man?" b/w "Spray Coat": 7"

If you're a fan of the bouncy jangle of early power pop—with contemporary nods to the smart, snotty hooks of the Briefs and Clorox Girls—but with more of an outsider, socially awkward overlay, Houston's Something Fierce is well worth checking out. Their *There Are No Answers* LP on Dirtnap that came out a year or two ago is a firecracker. This 7", however, is a little odd. The stronger of the two tracks is "Where Ya Goin Man?" which is on the aforementioned LP. It sounds a bit little more sped up here. "Spray Coat" is a perfectly okay, very short cover. It's so short that I get



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the feeling that both songs could have fit on the same side of the 7", leaving all that virgin space for a couple more songs aching to be etched into some grooves on the other side. It's a bit of a logistic head scratcher. If you've never heard the band, I suggest the LP. If you see this in the bin, know that there's just a little bit of new sonic meat on these bones. Looks nice, though, for sure. -Todd (Action Town)

#### SONS OF ISHMAEL: Hayseed Hardcore: LP

I have to admit, this is the first time I have actually listened to this band. I'm sure I heard them, but I probably was not paying attention. My brother has a copy of the first press in his collection that he had gotten early on when we were growing up. But my tastes were leaning more into crossover and thrash metal at the time (1985) while my brother was listening to bands that were fast and faster. Funny how things that were not palatable to me in the past can become favorable over time. This now sounds fantastic to me, like a recently unearthed, long-lost toy that was a favorite. Kind of reminds me of the Neos meets the first DRI record. Straight ahead fast hardcore that is not overindulgent. Definitely has the sound of the time period that is hard to replicate. Included are the songs off the original 7" with some bonus comp tracks. Not knowing any history of this band, it was quite a miracle that a band from a small town with no punks could come out with something with this much ferocity. Meaford, Ontario, Canada at

the time had, or still has, a population of 4,200. I'm sure they were the freaks about town. Great to see that another obscurity is now available again without having to purge your bank account on Ebay. I'm still waiting for the day someone re-releases the *TO Hardcore* '83 tape. -Donofthead (Schizophrenic)

#### SOTATILA: Vituiks Meni: EP

Whoa-ho-ho! Another rager from these guys. Their debut EP, *Eepes* from 2008 was/is definitely one of my favorite records of the past decade. One of those "If you were stuck on a deserted island, and could only have ten records..." records. Blazing '80s-style Finnish hardcore that sounds like all the classic bands of that era: heavy guitar, thundering rhythm section, and vocals that are a combination of growled and spoken, reminding me of the singer from Appendix. Fast paced without being a blur, raw without being tuneless; teetering on the brink of chaos, yet they somehow manage to keep the whole thing under control. This record picks up where the first left off, and is just as much of a crusher. The title track sets the tone for all that is to come. And it's all great. "Napit Irti!" is as catchy and memorable as it is raging. "Miks Sa Elat?" is a good mid-tempo song to offset the fast assault and helps accentuate the power these folks can conjure up in their music. May be premature to say this, but I'm pretty sure this will be on my list of best records of this decade. So awesome! -M.Avrq (Havoc, havocrex.com)

#### SPASTIC PANTHERS / THE THROWAWAYS: Split: 7"

Side one is some impeccable Canadian hardcore by the Spastic Panthers. I was on their side before putting the needle on the record due to their hilarious artwork aping Body Count's debut album, however the music greatly exceeded my expectations. They fit four songs of speedy early '80s hardcore on the A side and made me a fan despite the last song on their side being a dud, relatively speaking. The second side is ragged, poppy garage rock with female vocals by The Throwaways, also from Canada. Like the Spastic Panthers, they deliver four songs on their side with no songs over two minutes. Their standout track is "Pterodactyl Clap" which pulses and rages with aerial reptilian fury. In the simplest of terms, I like what these Canadians are up to. -Jake Shut (Handsome)

#### STAN MCMAHON: Self-titled: Cassette

Apparently, this guy is famous because of a sort of half association with Guided By Voices. Aside from being their roadie for a while, and appearing on one of their bootlegs, he is also the lead singer of the first Guided By Voices cover band. Of course, we're all thinking, does the album sound anything like Guided by Voices? Well, kind of. If Guided By Voices used a lot more acoustic guitar and was sung by a guy who sounds like he's the lead singer of a Guided By Voices cover band. I'm assuming if you use over a decade of your life to dedicate yourself to one band, it's likely

that their influence is going to sink in, no matter what kind of musical project you do. I guess what I'm trying to say is that in this guy's head he has a set of tastes, or voices, by which he is clearly being guided. -Bryan Static (Burger, burgerrecords.webs.com)

#### STARKWEATHER: This Sheltering Night: CD

I want to take this opportunity to pledge my undying love to the Deathwish Inc camp. Those cats consistently put out the best hardcore releases of every given year, and it just so happens that this year's menu includes a fucking new Integrity LP, a new full-length from Bitter End—one of the best new-ish hardcore bands going—and, on top of those and scores of other top-notch titles, a fresh offering from one of the greatest hardcore (sorta) bands to ever grace the planet: Starkweather. The influence of Starkweather's debut LP *Crossbearer* is inestimable. Converge, Overcast, Coalesce, etc... hell, nearly all of the hardcore "greats" of the last two decades have expressed debt to Starkweather's unique brand of progressive metal/hardcore. After a lengthy lack of recorded output (ending with 1995's *Into the Wire*) Starkweather returned in 2006 with *Croatoan*, an absolutely amazing double LP showcasing a new lineup and a complexity and proficiency only hinted at on earlier releases. *This Sheltering Night* continues in a similar vein, yet expanding on every element: intricacy, melody, production, everything. Rennie Resmini has never

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sounded so venomous (which, for those familiar, is quite an impressive feat) and the playing on this record is completely astounding. I could go on at (even longer) length about this band and this record, but put simply, if you are a fan of heavy hardcore and/or progressive metal, I implore you to check out this record and everything Starkweather has done before it. Essential. —Dave Williams (Deathwish, deathwishinc.com)

#### STATUES: *New People Make Us Nervous*: 8-song LP

This is a re-issue of the getting-hard-to-find debut LP by Canada's Statues. It's firecracker power pop and I stand by my previous (hugely positive) assessment that they're the best Dilbert punk band on the planet. But I'd like to augment that with two other reference points. William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and The Who's *Quadrophenia*: two well-known works that are examinations on class and, ultimately, indictments of greed and avarice perpetuated by that class structure. Piggy gets murdered. Ace Face's Vespa is ghost ridden into the sea. Right below the surface action is a structure that has been in England for centuries and adopted by Canada. (They do share the same Queen.) It's the mundane stuff that all slowly adds up to a boil, and the Statues have got its pulse: Standing in lines, separating fences, processing orders, satellites monitoring movements, bosses monitoring mistakes, the inability

of technology itself to make human connections, telemarketing prompts during dinner, being forced or coerced to rate your own productivity on a scale of one to ten, and middle management scapegoats. It's the death by a million little bites of modern middle class life preoccupied by the illusion that the ladder to a more fulfilling life is through making more money. And like both *Lord* and *Quadrophenia*, in *New People Make Us Nervous* there's this tension, this impending snap; for the storm, for rebellion, for revolution, for the return to a natural state that doesn't involve corporations in collaboration with the state. And that's what the Statues sing about, so bouncily that you might miss it if you're pumping your fist and spilling your beer. And that's part of what makes The Statues so fuckin' great. —Todd (Deranged)

#### STEVE ADAMYK: *Speed It Up*: 7"

Real solid power pop from Canada (Steve is also in The Sedatives). Harmonic, peppy, cute, dots, stripes, lines, black and white, pogo vibes—your socks will stay on, but it's a lot of fun and doesn't wear out the welcome. —Speedway Randy (P Trash, ptrashrecords.com)

#### STYMIE / KICKING SPIT: *Split*: 7"

What a friggin' world. The guys from For Science and The Ergs! are playing hardcore and the guys in ANS and Seasick (New Jersey) are playing pop punk? And Dirtnap is releasing the hardcore and Cowabunga is releasing

the pop punk? Funny times. Good thing it's best just to not think so much about it and enjoy the quality tunes. The new Stymie songs sound like the EP that could have been released after the Rivethead 12": melodic, multi-vocalists punk rock with rockin' change-ups and plenty of girth. Definitely advised for people who are losing their shit over The Brokedowns. Kicking Spit is also running on similar fuel, but with much more of an East Bay sound and some straight-up Radon vocals. That and the wicked guitar solos make for this split coming to a neck and neck tie all around. Splits don't get much more well-rounded than this. —Daryl (Cowabunga)

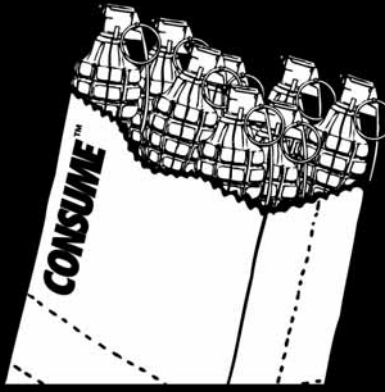
#### SUBHUMANS, THE: *Same Thoughts, Different Day*: 2 x 12"

A few years ago when Vancouver's Subhumans came out of retirement with their amazing *New Dark Age Parade* record, the questions immediately arose about reissuing their back catalog. Last year, they released *Death Was Too Kind*, which was a compilation of their early singles. Great, for sure, but the real hunger remained for the band's debut LP, *Incorrect Thoughts*. What was the hold up? Well, it seems that in the thirty-plus years since its release a now-defunct California record label (CD Presents) is claiming ownership of the record, even though the band has never dealt with the label and has never been paid by them. Surely the band could have taken the label to court, but why not spend their time and money re-recording the classic record

and releasing that instead? Well, right off the bat, this kind of thing makes me nervous. That record captures a certain time and place, and I wasn't sure that it could be recreated faithfully. I was wrong. The new recordings are amazing in how they bring through the energy of the originals. I guess it goes to prove the strength of the songs. I'll admit there are slight differences that threw me off at first. A note here and there are changed, but it works. The production is great and from start to finish this record proves that these guys haven't lost a bit of their edge or talent. Now the reason that it says "2 x 12" in the header is that this is a double record, but it's not a double LP. The first disc is the re-recorded *Incorrect Thoughts* in its entirety and the second platter is a 12" single featuring a few songs from the same era as *Incorrect Thoughts* but were never recorded before. Also amazing, I might add. I know that I'm a bit of a fanboy when it comes to The Subhumans, but if you're reading this you probably already know how important the original record is in Canadian (if not worldwide) punk rock history. I can tell you that the record is back, lyrically as relevant as ever, and sounds great! —Ty Stranglehold (Alternative Tentacles)

#### SUPERYOB: *Aggrophobia*: LP

Reissue of the debut LP by this English band, limited to 500 copies. Apparently not released on vinyl before, fans of U.K. punk, pub rock, and oi will find a whole lot to like



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with Superyob. According to the band, this is the original mix of the album, rather than the one that was released previously. The band is fairly diverse as street punk goes, reminding me of everyone from Vanilla Muffins to Cock Sparrer. Melodic but tough street punk is the order of the day here and the band ably pulls it off. —Mike Frame (Rock N Roll Disgrace)

**TAXPAYERS, THE:**  
***A Rhythm in the Cages*: CD**

Folk punk has gotten out of hand lately. What once was a rare and unique thing has become the cringe-worthy genre that every band now feels obligated to go into at least once per record. Yes, it's the '00s version of ska. So, yeah, The Taxpayers are a folk punk band, but they have an energy about them that makes them strange and that works for me. I say give this record a try. It's free over at [quoteunquoterecords.com](http://quoteunquoterecords.com). That's the spirit. —Bryan Static (Useless State, useless-state.com)

**TEUTONICS, THE / JINXES, THE:**  
***Losers of the 93/KHJ Battle of the Bands*: 7"**

The packaging for the split 7" purports itself to be losing entries from a radio station's battle of the bands contest. Fitting the theme, both the Teutronics and The Jinxes flaunt their musical amateurism for two songs respectively, but also have some charm and melody backing up their crudely crafted sounds. The Teutronics sort of remind me of the Trashies sans the keyboard and are

goofy as fuck mid-'60s garage rock. The cheesy baseball organ intro on the Jinxes first song alienated me early on, but as soon as the guitars cranked into a gallop I grew fond of what they were doing. Both songs sound like they were recorded in a bathroom on a boombox, but it fits this vinyl celebration of primitive garage rock to a T. —Jake Shut (Boss Hoss)

**THAT'S INCREDIBLE: Self-titled: 7" EP**

I watch a dog show, on average, once a year. There are "best of breed" selections, and then a "best of show." It's funny stuff: dressed-up grownups cupping dogs' balls; over-groomed dogs that have been bred for generations to have the "best" characteristics of that dog's "dogginess." It's like the Warped Tour for canines: lots of hair products, lots of strutting. It's a world I'm alien to. That's Incredible is nothing like any of those dogs on those fancy, well-lit stages. I'm so not saying That's Incredible are mutts. I'm saying that That's Incredible is the best possible scenario if elements and strains of the Sovietettes, Toys That Kill, Dick Army, and Killer Dreamer got together and started bashing away: four songs of loveable, fiercely loyal, dedicated, scrappy, melodic DIY punk. They're comforting echoes of their previous and still-running bands. It's sorta expected, but in an impressive way, like catching a Frisbee way above your height over and over again like it's no big thing, and then bringing it back all slobbery and partially chewed. —Todd (It's Alive)

**THIS RUNS ON BLOOD: The Ocean in Black and White: LP**

I really like the vocals on this album. It's a perfect mix between the vocals of bands like City Of Caterpillar and Blood Brothers. This is intense and experimental hardcore which can go from full blast to a crawl without losing an ounce of intensity. This is some of the most intense stuff I've heard in a while, with some awesome blast beats. My only complaint would be the sound clips which start out cool but eventually get too prevalent and time consuming; also, loop tracks with annoying sounds are not cool. That being said, it's always great to see this side of hardcore, as opposed to so much stereotypical chugga chugga cheesy jock crap. This rules! Check it out and pick it up. —Rene Navarro (End Theory, endtheoryrecords.com)

**T.H.U.G.: Self-titled: 12"**

Sydney, Australia's T.H.U.G. play hard oi, like something out of the early 1980s U.K. skin scene. Inspired more by bands like Combat 84 than the softer sounds that preceded them or the faster sounds that succeeded them, this is some seriously rough stuff. The violent lyrics are clearly tongue in cheek, making this almost seem like a parody record at times. But the music is so seriously kick-ass, that it doesn't matter if they're for real or not. Especially notable is the song "69," preaching about how old skins should let the kids take over: "Don't worry about 69 / kids now days they're doing

fine." It's hilarious, rocking records like this one that us fans of thuggy punk live for. —Art Ettinger (Rock 'N' Roll Disgrace, [mrdisgrace.com](http://mrdisgrace.com))

**THURNEMAN:**  
***Tegelsten för Tegelsten*: 7" EP**

Thrashy Swedish hardcore that eschews the expected Discharge template in favor of ringing chords, varied tempos, and a bit more texture to the tunes. Very nice work. —Jimmy Alvarado (Sorry State)

**TIGON: Self-titled: 7"**

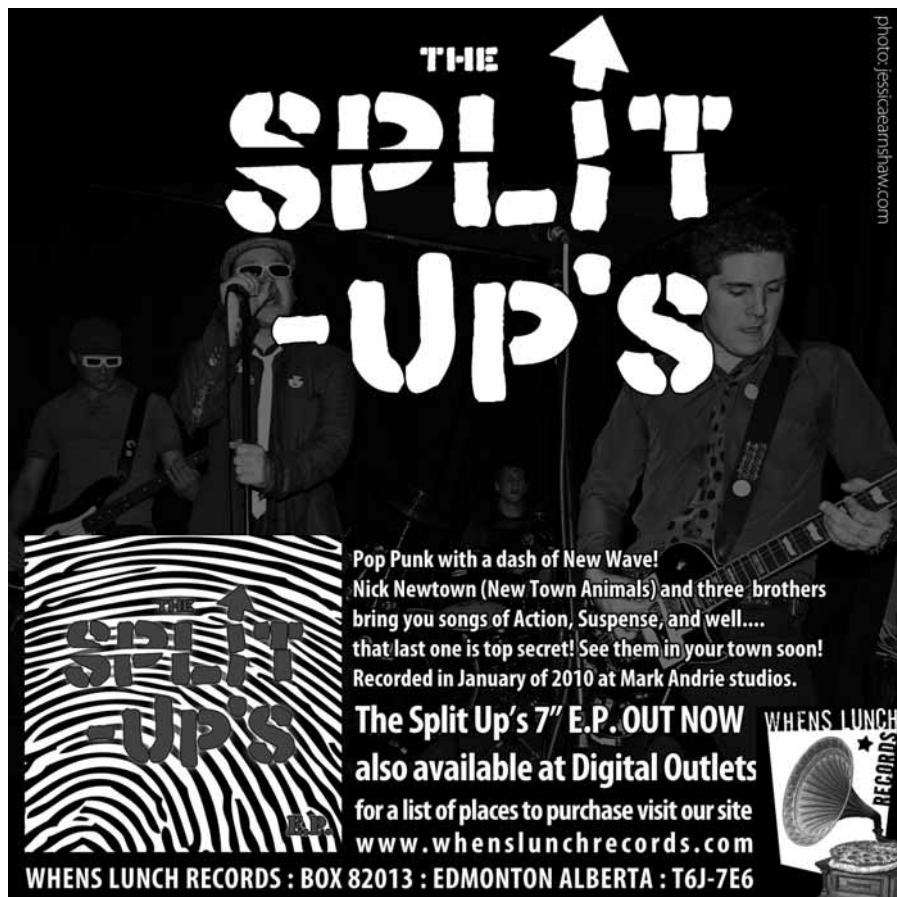
Unabashed noise rock mongering here, with lotsa screamin', sludgy beats, and thuddin' guitars aplenty. If you're lookin' for something to whistle while you're workin', what you're gonna get here is the aural equivalent of what you feel when the boss munches on your ass over dumb shit. —Jimmy Alvarado (Tigon)

**TIMMY'S ORGANISM: I'm on a Hunt!: 7"**

Dirty proto punk inspired racket from Timmy Vulgar and co-conspirators. The A side, and title track of this single, is a rough and filthy-sounding mid-tempo song. A smidge of the New York Dolls, a tad of the Heartbreakers, and topped off with some early Cleveland belligerence. It starts off with a lurching pace then transitions to a faster gait that raises the energy level. I really like the guitar sound here. Johnny Thunders meets Keith Richards—bluesy and cutting at the same time. The B side, "Don't Forget You Pretty Stare," slows things down and changes the tone to



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something slightly more reflective, and yet they throw in the line, "Don't forget your underwear!" Two songs to give you a taste. I find I need a little more. How about an EP or even an LP next time? —M.Avrq (Douchemaster, douchemasterrecords.blogspot.com)

**TOMBSTALKER / DAWN OF WOLVES: Cemetery Woven Ritual: Split CD**

What do you want to learn about when you listen to music? Do you want to learn about labor disputes that took place decades ago? Political struggles in countries you can't even afford a plane ticket to? Hell no (actually, you probably do, and I do too, but just go along with me here, okay?), you want to learn about monsters! On this CD, Dawn Of Wolves teaches about the Rasalka (although they spell it Rasalka), gorgeous fish-women from Slavic mythology that lured men in with songs before drowning them (or tickling them to death, if you believe wikipedia, which you shouldn't). Tombstalker's death metal is a good match for DOW's, but their educatin' leaves something to be desired. —MP Johnson (Pragmatic)

**TOTAL CONTROL: "Retiree" b/w "Meds II": 7"**

Eddy Current Suppression Ring is the sum of its parts. One of those parts is guitarist Mikey Young, who has a staggering comprehension of a wide spectrum of lesser-celebrated music. In Total Control, he pairs up with fellow Australian, DX (UV Race). Total Control presents itself as a stripped-

down, dark-sounding synthesizer constricting robot-claustrophobic voice effects, powered along by a hard-working drum machine. It doesn't sound like a dalliance but a collaboration well aware of the most biting and cynical early Devo tracks and the sonic plague that Suicide attempted to inject into every song. I have a feeling that if this wasn't a 7", these songs could have gone on for half an hour apiece. I'm glad it's a 7". —Todd (Iron Lung)

**TRANSGRESSIONS, THE / SIDE PROJECT, THE: Stop Wasting My Time: Split 7"**

These two very Midwestern pop punk bands from Wisconsin both totally kick ass. Having lived there for three years, I can with confidence describe Wisconsin as one of the most fucked-up, white bread places in this already shady country. But being around such oppression means the kids into cool music are all the more excited, giving each town a feisty basement scene. Transgressions play very D4-influenced melodic punk with Side Project taking a more Ramones-ish approach. The Transgressions side of the split is slightly stronger, with dynamite production and searing vocals. I wish Transgressions were playing when I lived in Madison. The cover sleeve features a tattered Pizza Pit (a repugnant, yet lovable WIIA chain) box, taking me back to the land of beer and cheese. I'm feeling it. —Art Ettinger (Traffic Street, trafficstreetrecords.com)

**TRENCHFOOT: Demo: Cassette**

Stumbled upon this tape, which is kind of thrashy, without really coming off as hardcore. Think like earlier/less technical I Farm, with a little San Pedro-esque weirdness substituted for math rock. Plus, there's a hint of bands like God Hates Computers. Good stuff, and while I am a fan of books, I disagree with the old "kill your TV" sentiment, and instead suggest checking out something that's actually well written (like *Monk*), instead of just watching something awful (like *Jersey Shore*) "ironically." —Joe Evans III (Self Released)

**UNNATURAL HELPERS: Cracked Love and Other Drugs: CD**

**UNNATURAL HELPERS: Self-titled: 7" EP**

I'm probably gonna catch hell for saying so, but these kids sound to me like they've been dipping their toes into the same cesspools as Mudhoney back before the whole grunge shit blew up in everyone's faces and the major labels started throwing money around like syphilis. Meld catchy hooks, occasionally sludgy tempos, howling guitars, and a sneaky pop sensibility that has hints of the '60s around the edges and you've got yourself a party. —Jimmy Alvarado (Hardly Art)

**UNRULED: Butchers of Warfare: LP**


Did not know that this band from Montreal existed back in the mid '80s. With only one 7" under their belt before their demise, it just didn't cross my radar. Looking at the insert, they have a

good amount of shows under their belt from that time period, playing with the likes of MDC, GBH, Discharge, and Dead Kennedys. Not sure what the 7" sounds like, but from what I hear on this LP, they sound like they held their own. Heavily influenced by the U.K. scene, I hear a strong influence of GBH meets the Varukers while adding their touch of metallic guitar into the mix. This resurrection features two original members with the assistance of members from the band Inpsy. A solid release that a newcomer like me would have never guessed was a reformation band. From what I have seen locally in reformations, I would have not given this a chance. —Donofthead (Schizophrenic)

**VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL / THE GOD DAMN DOO WOP BAND: Covered: 7" EP**


I'm a fan. I'm a fan of contemporary, not-the-same bands sharing splits. I'm a fan of said bands covering one another's songs. Bands are often the biggest fans of other bands. And what better way to show that appreciation than a cover and sharing intimate space on the surface of all holies, the 7"? Vacation Bible School: I'm almost willing to risk a free punch in a dark parking lot without retaliation that at least one of the following is true: one of the guys in the band owns a Rivethead record, one has seriously contemplated a Screeching Weasel tattoo, one has filled in for the Copyrights, or that they've hung out shirtless with the Sass Dragons. (All positives in my book.) The God Damn Doo Wop

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Band: Ladies, not since *Grease* has cute equaled tough so perfectly. Booted switchblades, crinoline, hand claps, and—what's it called?—in-tune singing with lots of parts. Where are my pants? Oh, they've been charmed right off me again. Damn it. So good. —Todd (Traffic Street)

#### VACCINES: Self-titled: LP

What you get here is some speedy garage-y punk from this Seattle band that was around in the late '90s/turn of the century. The Vaccines had a track on a Junk Records compilation way back when and they fit right in with the aesthetic of that label. This LP is packaged beautifully, with a full-color eight page booklet and a *huge* poster to go alongside the colored vinyl. The whole thing appears to be a real labor of love for all involved. The band played all the local haunts and shared stages with everyone from Fear to Valentine Killers to The Bulemics. Fans of the Weaklings, Electric Frankenstein, Zeke, and the like would find a whole lot to like with the Vaccines. —Mike Frame (Wolf Dog)

#### VARIOUS ARTISTS: Crack Rock City: CD

This is a compilation of Michigan punk bands. I have lived in Michigan for most of my life and have been very involved with live rock music for the last fifteen years or so. I have only ever heard of four (out of twenty!) of these artists. I've only seen two live. Either I'm blowing it or these guys are pretty obscure. Most of the stuff on here is pretty bad hardcore punk with no real tunes. It also includes

my absolute least favorite band from our state, Ouch Me Arse. So, Todd, if you're the one who sends me my review materials, you owe me for sending me a CD full of the worst bands my state has to offer. I wasted a whole afternoon listening to this garbage and writing this review, and our local record store won't even buy it from me. (They laughed at me!) —Ryan Horky (Class Struggle, mmc-nhc.tk)

#### VARIOUS ARTISTS:

##### *Dangerous Intersections VI: 7"*

No High Fives: Probably the first pop punk band I've ever heard that plays in dropped d tuning. I'm guessing that if Havoc put out a Fifteen record, it would sound like this. Manix: Minneapolis pop punk in the proud tradition of Rivethead, Dear Landlord, etc. This is probably the best song of theirs I've heard to date. Humanoids: If Rivethead *really* played up their Screeching Weasel influence, they'd probably sound like this. Taxpayers: Kind of jazzy, they start off like a cross between the Influents and Grabass Charlestons, until they ramp it up towards the end. Kind of the odd b and out on here, but I dig it. —Joe Evans III (Traffic Street)

#### VARIOUS ARTISTS: Rodentia: The Best of Dark Roots Music: 2 x CD

I discovered that this is a perfect record to listen to while driving the back roads of western South Carolina at midnight. That said, if someone were to make a film in the spirit of Flannery O'Connor's "Southern Gothic" style or

one that features a bunch of zombies wreaking havoc in Bill Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County, this would be the perfect soundtrack. Some songs are alt-country, some are alt-bluegrass, and some sound like a more malevolent and creepy version of early Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds. A few songs even sound like a folksy, hillbilly versions of street punk or '80s synth-pop. The thirty-plus tunes on this are diverse in sound, but the overall spirit of the record is remarkably consistent, touching those dark corners of life that are filled with fear and dread and occasional touches of black humor. Awesome. —The Lord Kveludulfr (Devil's Ruin)

#### VARIOUS ARTISTS: Untitled 21: A Juvenile Tribute to Swingin' Utters: CD

I'm sure I'll get some flack for having an opinion about this (because, you know, people who review records aren't supposed to have an opinion) but isn't it a bit too soon to release a tribute record for a band that is currently still active? As of May 2010, the Utters are still releasing records and are sparsely playing shows in their native California. Isn't this like getting a gravestone pre-made for someone who's still alive? Whatever, on to the music. I was quite impressed with the great mix of well and lesser-known bands that contributed to this disc. Fucked Up is sandwiched between La Plebe and Flatfoot 56. The bum about tribute discs is when a band practically copies a song note for note. Then again, Useless ID's complete remake of "Unpopular

Again" as the lead off song gives you the impression that you're in for a bad time. Thank goodness for Off With Their Heads' awesome take of "Next in Line" and even Street Dogs do a great live version of "The Dirty Sea." The rest are either barely memorable or utterly (hyuck, hyuck) boring. The rad cover art is courtesy of good old Johnny "Peabucks" Bonnel but, unfortunately, there isn't much more art to behold. Less discriminating and much more committed fans will surely enjoy this. I re-gifted my copy to a friend who I knew would dig it. —Juan Espinosa (Red Scare, redscare.net)

#### VERMILLION SANDS: Self-titled: CD

Must admit I picked this up because this band is named after a short story collection from J.G. Ballard. A mix of Americana, '60s pop like Nancy Sinatra, a fuzzed-out guitar, and other odds and ends, this is more of a laid back listen; light and easy going. More fun than dire. Strip away the melancholy of Mazzy Star and you get Vermillion Sands. —M.Avr (Alien Snatch, aliensnatch.com)

#### VULTURES UNITED: Savages: CD

Right off the bat, I liked the front cover featuring natives eating ice cream that had me crack a smile. Then I noticed it was on Red Scare, which meant odds were good I would like the record. Vultures United is a lot less poppy than what I normally think of as the "Red Scare sound," but strong stuff none the less. Vultures United are more about

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artfully treading the line of quirky and rocking post punk with similarities of Nation Of Ulysses or Paint It Black: herky jerky song structure and shouted vocals that never manages to obscure the quality of the hooks. I like this subgenre of punk rock and this is an impressive debut album from a California band to keep your eye on. —Jake Shut (Red Scare)

#### WAKAMONOS, LOS:

##### 4 Fancy Eleki Hits!! 7" EP

Picture if you will a bargain basement White Stripes, circa ten years ago, who are now Japanese and live by the ocean and smell really crustaceany and play oceany sounding two-piece surf instrumentals that sometimes borrow/beg/steal from source material such as "Blue's Theme" by Davie Allan and the Arrows. *Now picture them devoured by a giant octopus!* No one said rock 'n' roll is an easy life. **BEST SONG:** "Blue's Theme" er um i of course mean "Blue Steamer." **BEST SONG TITLE:** "V2." Who doesn't love a surf song named after the second Vibrators album? **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Cover blurb states "*We Can Play Only Our Originals!*" Well, THAT should surely keep Davie Allan's legal team confounded for the next few months! —Rev. Norb (Go Ape)

#### WAKE: Surrounded by Human Filth: 7"

The first side was three songs of face-ripping-off grind. Fast as fuck with vocals that go from shrieks that will strip paint from the walls to growls

that will register on the Richter scale, followed by pounding blast beats. The other side is one epic track of all the crust that you need. It sort of reminds me of Catharsis. The lyrics are about cannibals and zombies; fun, gory stuff like that and then some about hating the daily grind. Intense record that definitely stands out from the grind/crust ghettos. —Craven Rock (Hearing Aids)

#### WARVICTIMS: Domedagen: CD

To the untrained ear, this may sound like a bunch of noise. But to those of us with refined and exquisite taste in music, a band like Warvictims is noise for sure, but one hell of a glorious noise. Prolific has hell with what seems to be a good standard of quality control—they unleash another face-melting blast of D-beat raw punk. You get fourteen songs of unrelenting speed and mayhem. Distortion is high, speed even higher, urgency undeniable, and the vocals are spit out at a rapid pace, yet it's not some grindcore burp. This is hardcore punk rock, without a doubt. They slow the pace down for a couple seconds in the middle of the song "The Face of Extinction" then open it back up full throttle. The guitar solos are short and abrasive. Seriously sounds like an air raid siren in "Skarprattarna." All fourteen songs are solid and scorching, and, in many instances, this would get boring quick, but when done properly you're left wanting more at the end

of the ride. One of those discs where "play loud" truly applies. —M.Avrq (C.A.H., cahrecords.com)

#### WEEKEND WARRIOR / HEIL HIDIOT: WWHH: 7"

Weekend Warrior: First tune is a bit of mid-tempo hardcore with snotty vocals and nihilistic lyrics. Second tune has lotsa interesting time changes and lyrics lambasting bill collectors. Heil Hidiot: Female-fronted thrash from Italy that gives some "ugly fat man" a good dressing down, urges the listener to "kill your boyfriend now," and laments the fact they have no PMA. —Jimmy Alvarado (Mass Media)

#### WHITE LUNG: Self-titled: 7" EP

Was kinda worried, judging from the cover, that I was in for some sorta rock music stuff. Should've paid more attention to the label it was on, though, 'cause what you get is female-fronted punk/hardcore that is more eloquent than those merely pushing for speed 'n' meathead points. The songs are more creatively structured than the usual lot, and the guitar shies away from relying on barre chords, but none of the anger is lost in the delivery. —Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

#### WHITE WHALE: Demo: Cassette

Fuzzed-out garage punk played with hardcore intensity and velocity, but still retaining the essential vocal catchiness. Souped-up pop punk that reminds me of Scared Of Chaka,

with an underlying weirdness like Monorchid and Skull Control. Terrific shit. Four songs. From Buffalo. —CT Terry (Self-released)

#### WIDE ANGLES: Self-titled: 7" EP

*Take one:* Vocalist sounds like: Beard inside his throat. Band smells like: Beer as a perfume. Lyrics sound like: Depression as a call to arms. Lettering looks like: Cometbus's handwriting. Summer plans look like: Fest-bound. Sounds like the band listens to: Altaira, Tim Version, and Hot Water Music. *Take two:* While all the aforementioned is observable and verifiable, good bands always have a mystery; some deeply ponderous, and some, "Huh, I'm not sure why I like it, but I do." The Wide Angles, although fitting almost too neatly into previous templates and jigs (devices that hold a piece of machine work and guides the tools operating on it; not the dance), I hear a spirit in the Wide Angles. It'll be interesting to see how they flesh things out. —Todd (Let's Pretend / No Breaks)

#### WILLFUL NEGLECT:

##### Both 12" on One LP: LP

Absolutely awesome reissue here! Willful Neglect was a hardcore band out of Minnesota that ran from 1981 to 1984. During that time they record two LPs, both collected here, and a third LP, *Big Enough to Get It*, that never made it to vinyl, but was issued on the discography CD that came out on Neglected Records in 2003. The



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music was fast hardcore with some rock elements to give them more mass: think of White Cross, but not afraid to slow down a smidge here and there. "E.M.S. & D." is a great opener for their debut LP, and a song that will be instantly memorable. Both LPs are great, and there's a slight progression between the two. The second has a bit more of an edge. They have a weird robot-like intro for "Scratch-N-Sniff" that breaks up the thrash assault. Glad to see bands like this getting the reissue treatment, as it shows a bit more of what was happening at the time than just the usual suspects from the coasts. —M.Avrq (Havoc, havocrex.com)

#### WOUNDED LION: Self-titled: CD

Art + punk, as seen through the lens of early Talking Heads and Velvet Underground (plus a tiny bit of the Muppets). Wounded Lion are pleasantly minimal, sparse, androgynous, mid-paced, and jangly. They're also secretly funny. The pretension and self-absorption that often goes with this style of music is replaced by a nice dose of humor. If David Byrne or Lou Reed singing about the Degobah System (where Yoda's from) or Crunchy Stars (most likely an ode to the Swedish Chef's short-lived Cröonchy Stars cereal (while avoiding a lawsuit)) sounds like a fun time to you, I roundly endorse Wounded Lion. Super solid stuff. —Todd (In The Red)

#### X: Home Is Where the Floor Is: 7"

Here is a re-release of the Australian band X's 1978 debut single. Shredding

early punk that immediately gets rocking in a Damned, U.K. Subs kind of way. Works for me. They repressed this and their first LP in time for their first American tour only thirty-two years later. The old geezers sound great live and it's a real treat to have this record in my collection. —Ty Stranglehold (Rocknroll Blitzkrieg)

#### X: Wild Gift: LP

A re-issue of Los Angeles's X's second full-length from 1981. The packaging's gorgeous. The vinyl's nice and thick. The mastering's booming. If you're new to X, here are the crib notes. The first four full lengths—*Los Angeles*, *Wild Gift*, *Under the Big Black Sun*, and *More Fun in the New World*—are well worth your time and are as good as any mid-paced punk during X's early tenure. It gets pretty dicey after that. (*Ain't Love Grand* was produced by a pop metal dude. Not a great idea. And Billy Zoom had one foot out the door, saying that he'd quit if the band didn't get more popular. That didn't happen. Billy left the band for many years in 1986.) In *Wild Gift*, X mastered the alchemy of twisting crooked country roots into the then-still-new punk blast, planting male and female vocals into that soil, fertilized it with poetry, and it bloomed like a rose garden. X's early catalog is beautiful, it's thorny, it was carefully cultivated, and since it's been properly tended, has lasted decades and is set for a long preservation. As well it should.

Highly recommended. (PS: On the back cover, Billy Zoom is sitting on an AllState scooter. Those were the American-sold Vespas that Sears had on their mailorder for only a couple of years. Stylish.) —Todd (Porterhouse)

#### YOUNG GENERALS: "Reconnecting" b/w "Thirty One Winters": 7"

I like New Found Glory as much as the next guy—assuming the next guy doesn't like them—and I like Hot Water Music, but probably much less than the next guy. I'm guessing that is why I think the only redeeming quality of this 7" is that the vocals are low enough in the mix to barely be bothered by them. —Vincent (Intervention, interventionrecords.com)

#### YOUNG GOVERNOR: "Cindy's Gonna Save Me" b/w "Cannabanooids": 7"

Is Ben Cook the sleeper Canadian reincarnation (of a non-dead) Billy Childish from the early '90s? It seems that every two months, there's new music by him, be it through Marvelous Darlings, Fucked Up, or Young Gov. I haven't heard any flat spots. He's got his aesthetic nailed: exploitation of limitations. And that equals effortless, prolific, insanely catchy songs. "Lo-fi, agitated pop" doesn't quite do it justice. I'd say just-right-fi punk that's as much about melody as it is shaken agitation. It's like if mods, rockers, and punks weren't allowed wear clothes to show how different they were; instead, they had to fight out their differences naked. With solely

talent and instruments. The goal? Writing a song that'd have the whole room singing along by the time the stylus hits the taper-off groove in the center of the record. Young Governor wins again. —Todd (Dirtnap)

#### YOUNG LIVERS: Of Misery and Toil: CD

While I "liked" *The New Drop Era* when it first "dropped" (not funny), for some reason I was quick to kinda shrug it off as yet another "We're from Gainesville and man we dig HWM" band. It wasn't until seeing Young Livers play that it really hit me. The on-stage intensity completely floored me, and since that Common Grounds set they've become a staple of my daily listening. And, sure, probably no one would be surprised to learn this band is from Gainesville, but they certainly bring a lot more to the table than I initially gave them credit for. The passion on this record (and its predecessor, for that matter) is palpable. But dang, the more intricate harmonies and melodies, both vocal and instrumental, totally rocket *Of Misery and Toil* to a different level than Young Livers' debut. I can't wait to see this band again with these songs in my brain, inevitably shaking an angry-yet-hopeful fist in the air and shredding these vocal chords. Killer. —Dave Williams (No Idea)

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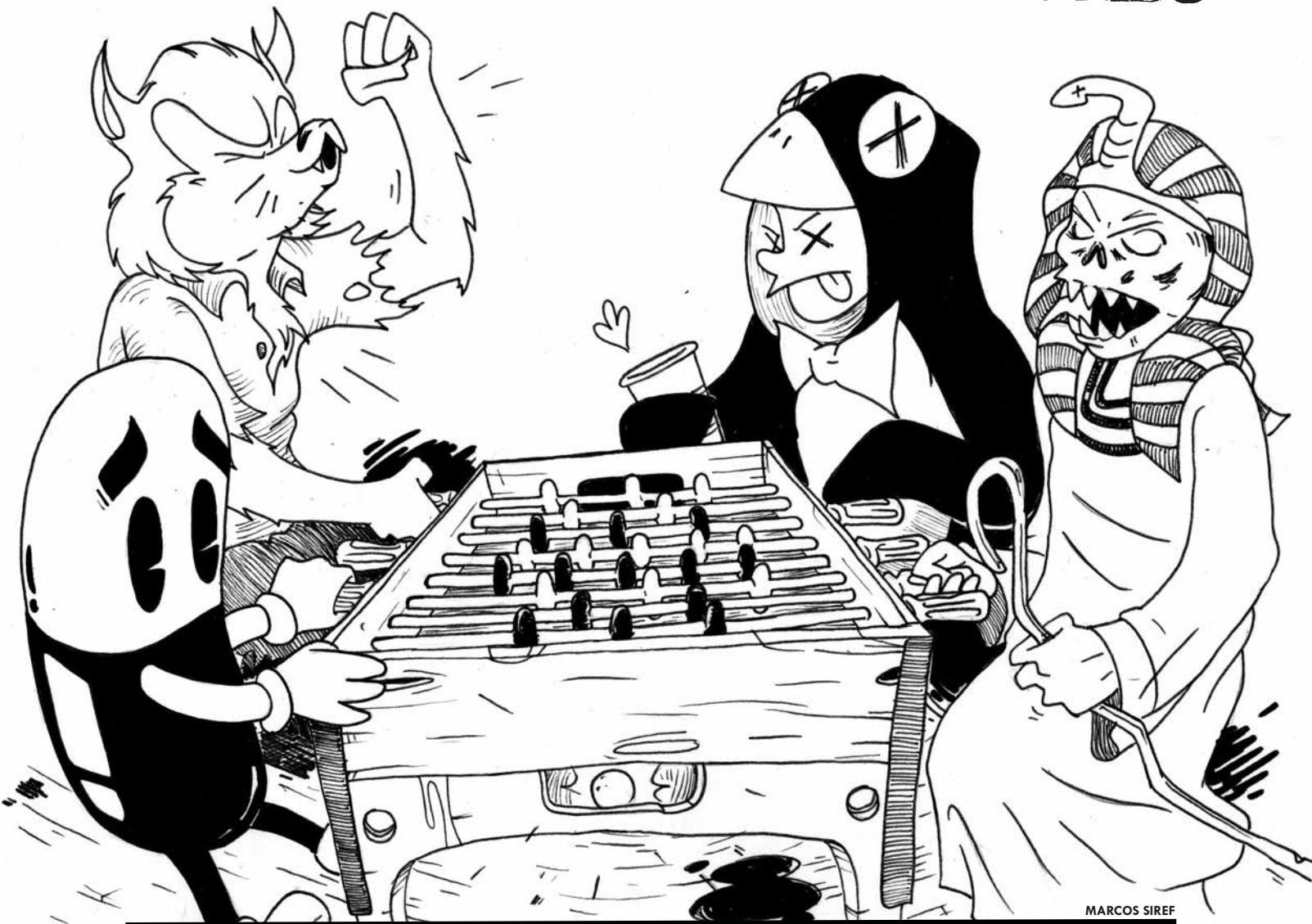
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# ZINE REVIEWS

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“Aaron is a  
ninja of prose.  
His weapons:  
snark and wit.”

—Craven Rock  
*UNEMPLOYMENT*

**ARTCORE #26**, \$10, 8 1/2" x 12",  
offset, 36 pgs., with CD

One of the longest-running punk fanzines in the world cranks out another issue! This one is packed with interviews from Shitty Limits, Harbour, Shot Baker, Warprayer, Capital, Cut Ups, and author Chris Walter. The “Vaultage” section contains NOTA, The Cramps, Angry Samoans, House Of Commons (the featured artist on the CD accompanying this issue), Eight Route Army, and an interesting interview with Burkhard Jaerisch of *Flex!* book. The stand out interview for me was with John Yates. (On par with the Jeff Nelson interview from issue #25.) The layouts are tight and busy, but at the same time clean and legible. Photo reproduction is pretty nice as well. There's obvious care put into the whole package. Not some half-assed job. Well worth your support. Pick up the available back issues as well. —M.Avrq (Welly, 1 Aberdula Rd., Gabalfa, Cardiff, CF14 2PH, UK, flw@ntlworld.com)

**ARTY PARTY**, \$3, 8 1/2" x 11",  
photocopied, 28 pgs.

Did you go to art school? Do you know who Jenny Holzer, Gordon Matta-Clark, and Nam Jun Paik are? No? Me neither! The *New Yorker*-style parodies of artists and their work in here don't mean much when there's no frame of reference. Take the first drawing: It's supposed to be a parody of Joseph Beyus and is of a guy holding a rabbit with the caption, “And then she said, like, whatever, so I was like, ‘No way!’ You know?” I'm not even going to pretend that I get that one. At least the authors are as overly self-aware as you would expect an art school graduate to be and pretty much wrote the review for me in the endnotes. “*Arty Party* seemed like a good idea since the ‘art world’ is totally humorous in its humorlessness... In so much as *Arty Party*’s jokey-jokes replicate the art world’s exclusionary reliance on ‘knowing’ we apologize.” Basically, they are doing the same thing that

they're mocking others for and they know it. How very clever. —Lauren Trout (James Payne, 115 W. 10<sup>th</sup> Ave., Columbus, OH 43201)

**BIG HANDS #8**, \$?,  
8 1/2" x 5 1/2", copied, 68 pgs.

I really like *Big Hands*. It's one of the few zines I consistently recommend to people. Aaron Smith is a hell of a writer—observant, morbidly funny, and whip-smart at documenting inconsistencies, fallacies, and embarrassments, both internal and in the world around him. I've yet to read an issue (and I believe I've read them all) that fails to either make me smile or simply admire the way he can lay down a sentence. That said, the man's also *incredibly* cynical, and *Big Hands* seems to read best when that cynicism is tempered through the lens of actual experiences. When he just writes about a subject, the man's vocabulary is so goddamn good and his worldview so bleak, it's just this barrage of well-worded hopelessness. Often funny, but ultimately dark, dark stuff. This issue tackles such heady topics as relationships and the internet—these nefarious, hard-to-define subjects where Aaron's able to simply run free on the page, the kind of meandering, mostly-hopeless treatises that he's so good at. The latter half of the zine is taken up with actual, you know, stories—a party he went to, a trip he took to a tiny town in upstate New York—and it's here that he's at his best. That cynicism and biting world-weariness (though often funny) is tempered with the who-where-what of a *story*, which makes it much more enjoyable. Much more relatable. It's consistently a good zine, one of the better ones out there, but Aaron's writing really shines when he *takes* us somewhere. —Keith Rosson (Aaron Smith, 1104 Imperial Rd., Cary, NC 27511)

**BLACK CLOUD, THE #3** \$1,  
5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 36 pgs.

What little this zine has taught me about Columbus, Ohio, horrifies me. Apparently, there is some

sprawling student “ghetto,” a gross appendage of Ohio State University where privileged students play at being poor. Editor Bret had left this place after graduating and moved to New Jersey with his girlfriend, but through some cruel twist of fate, finds himself moving back when his girlfriend finds a job in Columbus before he can find one in New York. In this issue of his zine, Bret attempts, with the help of some contributors, to present a multi-faceted portrait of Columbus. Unfortunately, the issue mostly falls short of its mark, dealing instead a heavy hand of drunken tales. The most depressing of these stars was Bret himself during an epic weekend trip back to Columbus with his girlfriend to find an apartment. Bret gets drunk with his old friends, stays out all night, and fails to keep the apartment-viewing appointments. Way to go, man. —Sean Stewart (369 E. 15th Ave., Columbus, OH 43201)

**CITIZENS PROMOTING A MORE PLEASURABLE PUBLIC #1-3**, free,  
5 1/2" x 8 1/2", photocopied, 36 pgs.

These zines were a lot of fun to read and, actually, quite inspirational, especially the columns on overcoming the fear of public excretion. For years, I suffered under the yoke of trying to get out as much poop as possible while trying to retain as much sound as possible. Like my fellow zinester, I now know to let it rip when necessary. This zine covers cool, liberating events such as naked bike rides and public snowball wars. It even sets up its own events such as protests, tickle-ins, and public dancing. It's laid out manually, which more than rules, and there's no “punker than thou” bullshit. If you're into fun, empowerment, and community, check these out. —Rene Navarro (CPaMPP@gmail.com)

**DUDES MAGAZINE #15**, \$4,  
8 1/2" x 11", printed, 80 pgs.

Ah yes, another gloriously surreal issue of *Dudes Magazine*. It's still lots of dude rants and pics of dudes doin' dude things, but it appears 2010 brings a new look to *Dudes Mag*. Layout

editor Mike “officially threw in the towel” and his replacement—Ennis—seems to know a couple design tricks. But no matter how you dress it up, it's still the dudes. Tons of stories about getting wasted, layin' cable, interviews (Ninja Gun, Jello Biafra, and Teenage Bottlerocket), look-a-likes, and everything else that seems to happen in their lives that's fit to print. The most surreal part was “Five Haikus for Brittany Murphy,” mainly because I had forgotten she had died. Most informative part: Nighthawk's recount of his twenty-first birthday. Good to know. This issue is bitch(in'). —Daryl (3827-A Connecticut St., St. Louis, MO 63116)

**FURY, THE #18**, \$6,  
8 1/2" x 11", photocopied, 68 pgs.

Excellent zine the whole way through: A good mix of music, politics, art, and everything in between. The writing is easily some of the best I've read in zines in years. Opinionated, but informed and well presented. Where many zine writers think having an attitude and being sassy is enough, the writers in here are smart enough to know there needs to be more to back all that up. On the music end, there are interviews with Dez Cadena, reprints of Antioch Arrow, and Nation Of Ulysses interviews, and tour diaries from Volcano and 97 Shiki. However, the reason you should really pick up this zine is for the article on Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman, the article “Art in a Heartless Land,” and the review section. Also, the photo section from Bill Daniel and art from Pettibon are the icing on the cake. —M.Avrq (Mark Novotny, 5413 6th Ave., Countryside, IL 60525, TheFuryZine@hotmail.com)

**JERK STORE #6**, \$?,  
5 1/2" x 8 1/2", printed, 52 pgs.

I appreciate zines like this. Here are some people who really care about punk rock and also care about putting out a quality publication. It's a simple idea, but it always works: pack as many interviews and reviews as possible

into a portable format and deck it out with really great, high-quality photos and other illustrations. Clearly, the editors have an eye for graphic design, and they also know how to conduct a good interview. Oftentimes, the cost of producing a zine like this is offset by an abundance of obnoxious ads, but this issue of *Jerk Store* only had one, which I barely even noticed. Featured bands include: XOXO, Underground Railroad To Candyland, Virgins, Off With Their Heads, and The Dopamines. Excellent work! —Sean Stewart (PO Box 284, Maylands, WA 6931 Australia, jerkstorehq@gmail.com)

of a conversation between two girls on the bus. They have an imaginary fight with imaginary weapons on the bus, one of them chokes, and then they save the bus with broken brakes from careening off the road at high speeds. The story is short, details are sparse; it doesn't even try to make sense. Not my thing. —Lauren Trout (Ben Castle, PO Box 581412, Minneapolis, MN 55458-1412)

**MOUNTZA #4**, 5 €, 8 1/2" x 11", offset, 110 pgs. Easily one of the best zines on the planet. I'd put this in my top three for sure. Send me \$100 cash and I'll

get a copy emailed to you for free. Subvert, indeed! —Sean Koeppenick (musiciscloud@hotmail.co.uk)

**SHITSHEET #2**, 8 1/2" x 11", \$2, xeroxed 18 pgs. This is a zine that reminds me of a lot of the zines I was reading in the '80s. It's a larger zine with a large font: a big black and white punk rock zine. And I dig it. It contains some good interviews with Urban Waste, Acid Reflux, and American Cheeseburger. Moreover, I won't spoil it, but their choice for the best Poison Idea record is inspired. The song-by-song breakdown is worth

drums and start banging away. It also inspired me to practice more and play in more bands. I definitely recommend it to any drummer (not just female ones), and especially to ladies who have always wanted to play drums but never thought it was possible. It's totally possible! —Adrian Chi (TomTomMag, PMB #85, 302 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11211)

**UNEMPLOYMENT** \$2.00 + postage, 6" x 4", offset, 44 pgs. Aaron Lake Smith, who does the zine *Big Hands*, put out this one-off through Microcosm on the subject of being unemployed—but not

**"Easily one of the best zines on the planet. I'd put this in my top three for sure. Send me \$100 cash and I'll tell you who's number one."**  
—Matt Average *MOUNTZA*, #4

**LAST BREATH #6**, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", offset. Thick Serbian punk zine, half in English. What I can read of it covers DIY scene politics and the way music is changing with technology. Features Gimp Fist, Path Of Decay, Bernays Propaganda, Government Warning, Hosenfefer, Gewapend Beton, Al Quint, The Restarts, Edie Sedgwick, and Hitman. Nice offset printing with clear photos. —CT Terry (Nemanja Boskovic, V. Vlahovic D3 1/7, 19300 Negotin, Serbia)

**MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL** #322, \$4, 8 1/2" x 11", 118 pgs. Here's the deal, *MRR*, I've never read a full issue of you. I got my hands on *Razorcake* first and that's kind of made me set in my ways in terms of how I like my music zines to work. Reading this felt like each columnist was trying to out-obscure each other (and some to out-offend each other). I did not enjoy much of the time I spent reading the features in this issue. I don't really know the rules for submitting to *MRR*, but I feel like they should be tightened. I'm not saying you have to be professional quality, but maybe not everyone's ready to read a personal soapbox. Just because you're the pillar of punk journalism doesn't mean you have to act like a blog to anybody who has ever enjoyed reading your zine. With that being said, here's what I did enjoy: the Jay Reatard eulogy, the Death interview, and the pages upon pages of the 2009 retrospective. —Bryan Static (PO Box 460760, SF, CA 94146-0760)

**METAMORPHOSIS OF MISS BADASS PEACOCK AND KIZZY**, free, 8 1/2" x 5 1/2", photocopied, 6 pgs. This is a random, silly story in the form

tell you who's number one. *Mountza* looks great, reads even better. How they're going to top this issue I have no idea, because this one is unbelievably great. Great? More like fucking awesome! Worth it alone for the Darkthrone interview. I, no joke, read this interview about five times. Then there's the article on illustrator Sugi, and that's pretty mind-blowing as well. That's followed up with an article on Japanese punk bands, which is also pretty relevant if you're into bands like Forward, Blowjob, Paintbox, etc. Should I mention the Red Dons tour report from Brazil? Then there's an article on records that sort of are punk but transcend the restrictions—bands like Total Abuse, Bone Awl, and Brainbombs. There's also a photo spread from Mateus Mondini and Daigo Olivia and interviews with Destino Final, *Distort* fanzine, Human Eye, Black Time, Love Potion, and Kid Crash. Anxiously looking forward to the next issue. —M.Avr (mountza.com)

**NO ONE RULES OK #1**, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", photocopied, 38 pgs. U.K.-based fanzine that features live reviews, interviews, and a handful of CD reviews. Interviews piqued my interest for bands that I have not heard of, like Vice Squad and Skinfull. Cool review of the Rich Kids reunion show, made timelier now that guitarist Steve New is pushing up daisies. Great overview of the underground punk scene across the pond. Full disclosure: I did a short add-on article for this issue that covers U.S. punk festivals. Don't let that deter you. Actual copies will be available at the Blackpool Rebellion Festival this summer. If that is not close to you, you can

the price of the zine. Trades welcome. —Steve Hart (Mike Kenneally, 1260 York St. #407, Denver CO 80206)

**TOM TOM #2**, \$?, 8" x 11", color printed, 25 pgs. The day I got my hands on *Tom Tom*, I read the entire issue in one sitting. A few days later, I read it again. It's all about female drummers, which, to me, is a dream magazine come true. Most of the (full-color!) pages focus on interviews with current drummers, ranging from jazz and classical players to electronic-beat makers and punk rockers. There are several sections focusing on technique which I appreciated, even though I don't understand how to read. I also liked section "1 Drummer 1 Question" because it gives the drummers more time/space to really give thoughtful answers. I would have liked to see more of a variety of articles (it's almost all interviews) and I could have done without the fashion page (where they have drummers model clothes and jewelry and they tell you how expensive it all is). My favorite part, by far, is the interview with Shaggy Denton (Hips, Saboteurs) because she's making jokes the whole time. To the question "What do you consider the most challenging thing about the drums?" she answers: "The most challenging thing is not smashing my hands." And to "Have you experienced any setbacks as a female drummer?" she answers: "Yes. My period. It sucks." Reading this magazine made me realize how unprofessional of a drummer I am. All these drummers know what brands and types of drums they prefer, and they all know what everything is called! I usually just borrow a friend's

unemployed in any glorious, noble, or artistic sense, nor in a punk life sense of the word. No, it deals with the reality of not being able to find work in a recession. It's about the futility of throwing your resume into an internet vacuum with hundreds of others applying for the same menial job. The feeling of uselessness one gets when they are not attached to the credibility of having a job. The dwindling bank account as one looks for a job all day, then spends their evenings getting wasted and wasting time. There's a doomsday feel to it when you read it, knowing things aren't getting any better. Knowing how on point he is when he says, "like some sadistic game of musical chairs, when the music stopped those who were left without a seat went broke, while the rest were stuck in their chair-cages, reluctant to leave awful jobs for fear that they too might end up like the unwashed masses of shopping-cart pushers outside." Aaron is a ninja of prose. His weapons: snark and wit. After bringing us into his world of penniless horror, he wraps it all up ingeniously with... *Crimethinc*. This is something that I hope will be a trend: the post-*Crimethinc* zine. The last portion of this zine is the writer reflecting on his younger days as a *Crimethinc* kid, wondering if the pseudo-revolutionary diatribes of their literature ruined him and stuck him in this hellhole of joblessness and looming homelessness. Years ago, when *Crimethinc* was in its heyday, it was a huge influence on a whole lot of punks, radicals, and, certainly, zine folk. Traces of their gospel could be found in four out of five zines you would pick up. Even those most critical of their manifestos were moved by



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**"Reading this magazine made me realize how un-professional of a drummer I am. All these drummers know what brands and types of drums they prefer, and they all know what everything is called!"**

**-Adrian Chi  
TOM TOM MAG #2**

its motivational, fiery language—at least a little bit more than they would ever care to admit. Some quickly dismissed it, others stuck around for a few years, but everybody eventually realized what a load of crap it was and moved on. Most of us don't want to admit that it had any influence on us at all and will speak no more of it, embarrassed at ever being so naïve, but Aaron is not afraid to look into his past. It really works because Aaron is not criticizing it politically, but just acknowledging it as a huge influence on his youth, then putting it in context with where he's at in life today. Aaron is truly gifted and a writer in his time. —Craven Rock (Aaron Lake Smith, 1104 Imperial Rd., Cary, NC 27511, microcosmpublishing.com)

**VOLUME DOPING #1**, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", photocopied, 26 pgs. *Volume Doping* is "a fanzine dedicated to documenting the music scene & DIY culture in & around

Vermillion, S.D." I had no idea that Vermillion existed, so I was stoked to have a little window into their world and to wonder what it would be like to live there while reading their show/record reviews. Then there are some interviews with their own Sasquash, Grex, and Cloud Dog. One part I found to be a bit weird was the list of songs for a break-up mix tape, picked by people around the scene, which contained some really, really terrible suggestions. Zines like this make me wish that back in my traveling days, I spent more time detouring into tiny towns like this one and not just hitting up the big cities and hyped places like Gainesville. —Craven Rock (Vermil1est@gmail.com)

**WELCOME TO FLAVOR COUNTRY #20**, Postage, 4 1/2" x 5 1/2", photocopied, 32 pgs. This is a thinking man's zine. It's obviously written by a smart guy. Kurt writes down his thoughts on death,

religion, fear, marriage, and parents in a very cohesive way. He manages to talk in-depth about what's running through his mind without rambling, which you would think is impossible if you had seen as many zinesters attempt to cover those existential topics as I have. It's vague in the sense that he focuses more on talking about concepts instead of telling stories; not vague in the "what the hell are you talking about?" sense that I usually get when reading philosophically-themed pieces. Kurt keeps on putting out solid issues of *WTFC*. You should really start reading it if you haven't yet. —Lauren Trout (Kurt Morris, 14 Taft St. #3, Dorchester, MA 02125)

**ZINE WORLD #28**, \$4 U.S. / \$5 Canada/ Mexico \$7 overseas, 8 1/2" x 11", copied, 49 pgs. An institution in the ever-shrinking world of zine review resources, *Zine World* has continued on course, mostly due to the tireless efforts

of editor Jerianne. In its heyday, it boasted a larger staff (full disclosure: I used to review for *ZW* and still help out with proofreading), but as with many long-running zines, the brunt of the work has increasingly fallen on the shoulders of one person. Despite this, *ZW* continues to deliver its unique mix of fascinating letters, underground press news, honest reviews, helpful resources for zine publishers, and free classifieds to its readers. A beacon of information in the disjointed world of zine producers and readers, *Zine World* has provided an important service for many years now. Let's hope it can keep doing just that for more years to come. —Sean Stewart (PO Box 330156, Murfreesboro, TN 37133-0156, undergroundpress.org)

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# BOOK REVIEWS



## **Come Hell or High Water: A Handbook on Collective Process Gone Awry** *By Delfina Vannucci and Richard Singer, 127 pgs.*

This book is a really practical look at what can commonly go wrong when people try to work together in a collective setting. Hell, even the cover has a good example: a cartoon depicting a guy swinging from the ceiling yelling "Woo" while his stone-faced fellow collective members look up saying, "Get down from there. We're trying to have a meeting," to which he replies, "Whatever. You're not the boss of me!" In reality, the problems in a collective can be much more subtle and serious, and this book covers many that I have seen in the past when trying to work in a collective setting. I am impressed by how the authors give a name to the kind of manipulation that some members will invariably try to pull off during meetings. Their analysis of what dynamics can be causing trouble in a group helped me to understand for the first time why I felt so uncomfortable in each collective that I have ended up leaving. If this were required reading for anybody in a collective, we would definitely see less drama and more camaraderie for that type of work or volunteer model. —Lauren Trout (AK Press, 674-A 23<sup>rd</sup> St., Oakland, CA 94612)

## **Diary of a Miscreant: A Morgenmuffel Zine Anthology**

*By Isy Morgenmuffel, 111 pgs.*

It's hard to believe that this comic has now been around for ten years. I remember first coming across it when I was relatively new to zines. I believe it was passed on to me via another British zinester. I remember thinking then, as I still do now, how different Isy's life seemed from my own. For anyone who is skeptical of whether it's possible to live within society, and yet outside the system, I encourage you to read Isy's comics. They provide insight into a radical urban lifestyle centered on anarchism, collective organization, and direct action against the state. Isy and her friends run a collective catering operation/mobile kitchen (called the Anarchist Teapot), where they travel to various festivals, actions, and gatherings and provide vegan food. It's tough not feeling inspired reading these tales of Isy's life. Not everyone would want to pursue Isy's exact lifestyle, of course, but it's clear that she's leading her life on her own terms and that alone is enough to inspire.

For this collection, Isy reorganized her comics roughly into sections to maintain a fluidity to the stories. The book starts out introducing the reader to Isy and the world in which she lives. We meet her mates and find out that she lives in a cooperatively owned house. There are also stories about the Cowley Club, the anarchist collective space that serves as a social center for Isy and her friends. Isy also shares many tales of the adventures she's had while making and serving food with the Anarchist Teapot, and other volunteer collectives she works with. The latter half of the book includes some stories of longer trips she's taken, including to Korea to see members of her family, and to visit the western United States. Interspersed throughout are snatches of radical history in comic form, as well as some new artwork and text where Isy shares personal details about herself and her politics.

Even if you've read all of Isy's individual comics before, this anthology is still a great way to enjoy them all over again, in a nicely organized way and with some new content, as well. Highly recommended. —Sean Stewart (Last Hours, lasthours.org.uk)

## **From The Graveyard Of The Arousal Industry**

*By Justin Pearson, 186 pgs.*

This book is repetitive, makes a lot of statements in no way backed by text, and feels like it was written in random pieces before being assembled as the incoherent piece of work it is. Being from Tijuana /San Diego, I've seen the Locust lots of times, like, a lot. Why? Because I like going crazy, but, specifically, because I like the bands Justin Pearson books, tours with, and releases... more than the bands he's actually been in. The music scene in San Diego is pretty tight knit, and to anyone not really aware of a lot of the bands he talks about, this book might read like a never-ending name drop, which it kind of is. While this guy has done a great deal for hardcore and punk music through his label, bands, and booking, I don't feel this book is on par with even the shittiest Locust 7". At least those were over really fast and could be pulled off better live. Read out loud, this would just sound like every guy who can spend hours walking you through every shitty relationship he's been in, his family drama, his band drama, and why every conflict he's in is not his fault. The only parts I found truly enjoyable were either about shows I went to or Tijuana, and I enjoyed the memories much more than the mediocre-at-best writing. —Rene Navarro (Soft Skull Press, 2117 Fourth St., Suite D, Berkeley, CA 94710)

## **Mythmakers and Lawbreakers**

*Edited by Margaret Killjoy 218 pgs.*

This book is a collection of interviews with a veritable who's who of anarchists in the world of art and literature (I think it's a who's who. Not a lot of household names here, folks). All involved wax philosophical on the topic of anarchy, what it means to them as writers and artists, and the way it affects their work. It's interesting to read each individual viewpoint on anarchy. Perhaps the most notable interviewee in this collection is Alan Moore, famed writer of many a beloved graphic novel (*Watchmen*, *V For Vendetta*) and he is at no loss for words on the subject. (His answer to the first question posed is an astonishing eight pages long!) Also featured are insightful interviews with popular punk illustrator Christy C. Road, author Derrick Jensen, and former *Adbusters* editor Jim Munroe. If you have an interest in anarchism and the work it inspires, this should quell any and all curiosities. Otherwise, you might not get a lot of mileage out of this book. —Andy Conway (AK Press, 67 4-A 23<sup>rd</sup> St., Oakland, CA 94612)

## **Role Models**

*By John Waters, 320 pgs.*

When discussing the films of John Waters, people generally consider his "good" movies to be his earlier, poorly made ones. The "bad" ones are often the ones he spent more time on. Good or bad, there is nothing like a John Waters movie. I am, for better or worse, a devotee of his entire filmography. With that in mind, I am going to make a statement that will be borderline blasphemy: I think he is often a better writer than he is a filmmaker. Waters' book *Crackpot: The Obsessions of John Waters* is one of my favorite collections of articles about pop culture. His latest book, *Role Models*, is an equally compelling collection of essays. This time, Waters focuses on people he admires, recounting meetings and experiences with some well-known and not-so-well-known personalities. Waters' writing is charming and honest. He shares information as a fan would; with no attitude in his delivery. He brings alive the world he walks in. The subject matter ranges from meetings with legendary musicians like Johnny Mathis and Little Richard to outsider pornographers. He has strong opinions about the continued incarceration of Leslie Van Houten, a surviving Manson family member languishing in prison over the infamous LaBianca murders. He also knows his way around a Baltimore strip club. But there is more to John Waters than a curiosity about pop and sleaze. His positivity transcends a surface curiosity about the underground; he seems to have a genuine curiosity about the world. His cult celebrity status allows him to walk through walls without causing a ruckus; he appears at home among kings and winos. Waters, through his unique insight into the world, holds the keys to real Americana. —Billups Allen (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 18 West 18<sup>th</sup> St., New York, NY 10011)

## **Snakepit 2009**

*By Ben Snakepit, 96 pgs.*

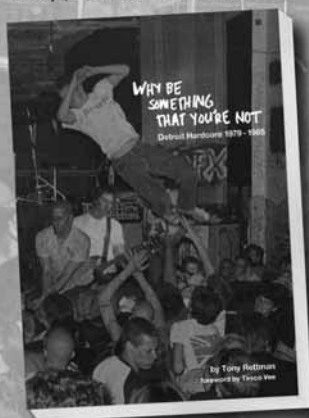
We all get old; this is a fact of life that I am well aware of. And yet, I was still initially surprised to open this annual anthology and find Ben Snakepit showing signs of aging. I started reading Ben's comic in its early days and was a steady consumer for a long time, although I hadn't seen an issue in probably the last couple of years. That fact isn't a reflection of my opinion of the comic (I've always liked it), but rather a not uncommon result of my own distracted nature when it comes to keeping up with things over time. So



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when I eagerly picked this up and started reading, I found myself wondering where was the Ben who goes to parties and shows every night? Why wasn't he biking everywhere anymore? Is that really a minivan that he's driving? I noticed a distinct reduction in the number of brodowns. Instead, Ben came home most every night to walk his dog and hang out with his girlfriend (the same one throughout the entire year, no less!). A few pages in, I admit to having become somewhat bored. But then gradually I settled into the new rhythm of Ben's life and began to enjoy *Snakepit* on a different level than I had before. While I used to relish escaping into the absurdity of Ben's hectic rollercoaster of a life, I now found myself commiserating with him as he grapples with the all too familiar drudgery of routine.

Most of us experience changes in our lifestyles over the years, be they subtle and gradual, or extreme and all at once. But most of us also entertain a pretty limited audience with these changes. Not so for Ben, though. I remember when he got called out for not realistically portraying his body size in the pages of *Snakepit*. He copped to it, though, and these days we see that Ben is a little bigger around the middle. I think Ben's introduction to this anthology lays it all out on the line: "I'm older, fatter, lazier, and I give less of a shit about everything." He talks about ending the comic sometime in the not too distant future, perhaps on its tenth anniversary. Maybe he's ready to reclaim all of his life for himself, not just the more personal stuff he's chosen not to include in the comic over the years. Whatever the reason, though, he's trusting his instincts and no one can fault him for that. In the meantime, there is still good reading to be found in the pages of *Snakepit*; it continues to offer what an autobiographical comic should provide: an honest window into a person's life. —Sean Stewart (Birdcage Bottom Books, birdcagebottombooks.com)

### The Taste of Penny

By Jeff Parker, 144 pgs.

At somewhere around three-quarters of the way through, I realized I recognized one of the tales from this book of short stories from Jeff Parker. It seemed really familiar and I suddenly thought, "Wow, did this guy plagiarize someone else I've read?" Then I checked my old reviews and realized that I had actually written about a previous work of Mr. Parker's, *The Back of the Line*, approximately three years ago, and this specific tale that read quite familiar was actually from that previous book. Thankfully, the majority of this stuff is new. If there is a theme of this work to be grasped, it's that of geographical diversity. There are tales from the American West, Russia, Quebec, the World Wide Web, and places not entirely known that give the work here a breadth that is comfortable without being too non-cohesive. While *The Back of the Line* was not bad by any means, the writing with *The Taste of Penny* certainly shows improvement with story ideas that seem more interesting and mature in their subject matter. It's not all about male-female relationships, although that is part of this collection. From the start of the book, the stories come out strong, with an interesting tale about a potential suicide bomber in Russia and a guy who has bitten off the tip of his tongue. I also enjoyed the story of the boy who travels in his father's suitcase in the luggage compartment on the bus. It was unusual—but not entirely impossible—and allowed me to wonder what it might be like to be in a similar situation.

While in my previous review of Mr. Parker's work, I kept coming back to Douglas Copeland and Chuck Palahniuk as comparisons, I don't feel as

though there is any of that spirit here and in that sense Parker has found his own voice, which is refreshing. Still, at the end of the day, it's a bunch of short stories, and, as with such collections, it can be really hit or miss. Some made me smile, chuckle, or got me to think. Others seemed to drag, lacking any sense of connection between myself and the story line or myself and the character(s). There is a moment in most short stories where, upon finishing reading one, I muse to myself what the point or message of the story was. "What was the author trying to get across? Or was there even a point?" More often than not, I found myself not entirely understanding the message when reading these stories. Or worse yet, I didn't even care. In that sense, it's hard for me to give this a gung-ho endorsement, but as a word of encouragement to Mr. Parker: when you are "on," you produce some solid, intriguing material that is certainly laudable. —Kurt Morris (Dzanc Books, 1334 Woodbourne St., Westland, MI 48186)

### We Are an Image from the Future: The Greek Revolt of December 2008

Edited By A.G. Schwartz, Tasos Sagris, and Void Network, 371 pgs.

Greeks seem to enjoy rioting. As I write this, there have been recent riots regarding their nation's potential bankruptcy and issues that go along with it that I can't begin to entirely understand. This book covers one such example and records the experience by speaking with individuals involved. It starts with some history of Greece and previous riots. It gets into an explanation of the events surrounding the December 2008 revolts seventy-four pages in. To put it simply, the police killed a young anarchist and it caused thousands to mobilize in direct action against the police and government. Many businesses were destroyed and many people injured in the resulting riots. The riots, however, were most likely more than just an outpouring against the police for the death of a teenager.

And this book seeks to explore those feelings with a wide range of folks. The stories are rough—taken from interviews—and occasionally translated poorly. But the perspectives are vast: stories from immigrants, anarchists from various cities throughout Greece, shop owners, and students are all included. There are also communiqués from an assortment of groups and some essays from the editors. And in that sense, it is an important piece of history in documenting the struggle and reaction by this group of individuals who might otherwise not have had the opportunity to share their thoughts.

Underneath these narratives, however, are bigger issues that remain unanswered: what is the point of violence in protest? Is it effective? What is the next step beyond street protest and violence? Are there other means of achieving goals than that path? Even some of the voices in the book question the use of violence, but many of those interviewed seemed to think it was necessary. I have real concerns about violence as a means of protest. Many of the issues for the protestors—whether they realize it or not—go much deeper than the murder of a teenager, as senseless and wrong as such an act is. There are economic and social issues, as well, that seemed to be the cause of much of the angst by protestors. The murder was just the spark that set it off.

All that being said, I still find this book to be important. Not only does it show the history of the times, but also perhaps more importantly, it shows that there is power in organizing behind such events as these and it is through that organization and solidarity that hopefully some change might occur. —Kurt Morris (AK Press, 674-A 23<sup>rd</sup> St., Oakland, CA 94612)

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### History on My Arms: DVD/CD

Directed by Lech Kowalski ((who directed that *D.O.A.* documentary on the English punk scene about thirty years ago)), this DVD is an absolute must for those of you who enjoy watching Dee Dee Ramone sitting on a stool talking, often with his shirt off. The twenty-seven minute title track is, apparently, outtakes from the sixty-four minute backup feature, *Hey Is Dee Dee Home* ((apparently released previously)), and, combined, they bring you, the viewer, over ninety full minutes of Dee Dee Ramone sitting on a stool in front of a black background, talking. And talking. And talking. Dee Dee talks, and he talks, and he talks some more—and, as you know, the guy is loopy as hell, but he's also a pretty interesting guy ((for one reason or another)) and quite charming—and, as he rambles on, he seems to build up more energy, but also seems to become more disconnected from reality, sounding progressively less believable as time ticks on. And, at the very butt-end of the Dee Dee twin-spin, with damn near ninety minutes of pure, unadulterated Dee Dee gone by, and your head veritably swimming from this non-stop barrage of seemingly unlimited Dee Dee, to the point where



*"We Fun is a documentary about the thriving music scene in Atlanta, GA, where there is apparently no shortage of bands featuring members with moustaches."*

—Andy Conway, *We Fun: Atlanta, GA Inside/Out*

you're barely following anything the guy says any more, he suddenly ends his hour and a half of not-a-word-in-edgewise speling with "—and all my other friends are dead." He then folds his arms and looks directly into the camera, dead silent. It's a completely arresting moment. The effect of having this non-stop torrent of Dee Dee suddenly halted is akin to the dead stops experienced at the end of sides one thru three of Lou Reed's *"Metal Machine Music"* noise opus ((so thank your lucky stars no one invented a locked groove for video yet)) — as if somebody had you pinned to a wall with a force field for ninety minutes and, without a word of warning, suddenly let you go—a bizarre, passive-aggressive crescendo of, like, sudden nothing. It's kinda cool. Rounding out the DVD is a twenty-two minute conversation with the drummer for Die Toten Hosen about the time Dee Dee, Stiv and Johnny Thunders tried to form a band in Paris. *Where's Mike Wallace when you need him?* Comes with a bonus CD of Dee Dee playing "blues" guitar around the house, while he feeds his cat and old Westerns play on TV. Don't know how much pot i would have to smoke before i thought that CD was a good idea, but i guess i should keep an open mind and remain willing to investigate such things. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I received this DVD in the mail seventeen years to the day that i first met Dee Dee Ramone. —Rev. Nørb (MVD)

***We Fun: Atlanta, GA Inside/Out: DVD***

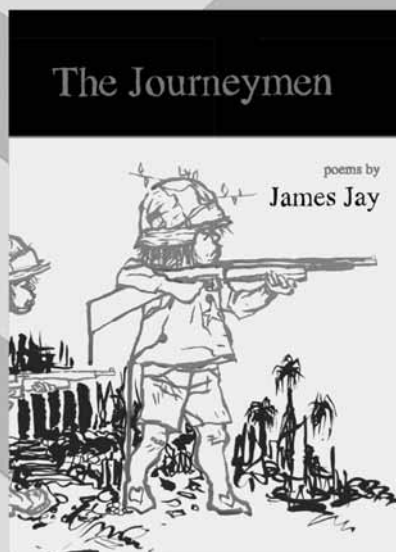
*We Fun* is a documentary about the thriving music scene in Atlanta, GA, where there is apparently no shortage of bands featuring members with moustaches. Through interviews with bands, labels, zinesters, and scenesters, the story of Atlanta's burgeoning indie rock underground of the past decade is told. The main appeal of this DVD for many would be its featuring of Deerhunter, the Black Lips, and Mastodon—three of Atlanta's bigger bands of the moment—but the documentary gives equal time to local favorites like Subsonics, Carbonas, and Bobby And The Soft Spots. Some highlights include Carbonas talking about the subtle nuances of shitting in the van while on tour and the profiling of the venue known as Whirly Ball, which is located in a strip mall and has bumper cars. I'm jealous that there isn't anything like that in my town. The live performance portions are extremely well shot, given the cramped quarters and fireworks during some of the sets featured here (namely King Khan And The Shrines). Atlanta has some really cool shit going on and *We Fun* is a loving testament to the DIY ethos that fuels said really cool shit.

—Andy Conway (MVD)

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